

...I have a dream that one day our society will take pride in our environments, and understand that it is not as poisoned as the media displays it to be.

read the rest of P. Crooks' POW on page 5



It's hard for us to believe, given the ever changing Beat personnel, for better or for worse, which we have been faced with the couple of month or so, it's truly a wonder, damn near incredible, we have this mighty 13.10 issue in your hands today. This editor wants to give thanks and praise to all you young typist and you editors who stepped up this week. Thank you. Yeah, unfortunately there's a number of units missing, that should be featured in this incredible issue, but, things happen, and hopefully we'll feature them in next week's equally compelling issue of writing and art from inside juvenile hall and beyond. Apologies to you writers who can not find your work in this issue.

About a week ago this editor received a very encouraging phone call from our old friend and BWO teacher, Mikhail Markhasev. It had been a long while since we last heard from Mikhail, who by the way is serving a life sentence without parole in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran CA. For you fairly new readers of The Beat Within, Mikhail, once upon a time dazzled us with thoughtful from the heart commentaries and poetry that moved many of our readers, young and old. The best part of this most recent phone conversation was Mikhail's pledge to contribute as often as possible to the pages of The Beat Within and we can't express it enough how fortunate we all are in having his wisdom back in our pages.

What follows is his introductory piece and two poems we received, after the phone conversation. So allow us to include this in the following editorial note, since Mikhail ALWAYS reads the editorial note when he gets a Beat. Welcome back Mikhail! See you in the BWO section after today!

*Behind the peachy stories
Of missions, fun, and money spent,
Of real or imaginary glories
My life was given me to rent.
So now the bill is due:
While to the wind I scattered
And lived without a clue
With hopes forever shattered,
I'm left to stand with empty hands
My past beneath the shifting sands
This present shame I cannot hide
Because I gloried in my pride. <ital>*

Here's another poem...

*What to say to the youth?
How to speak to the heart?
Simply tell them the truth
And our past is a start.*

And another...

*Experience is half the story:
A fool's a fool in any category
When in my soul I dare look
I know I'm given more than what I took.*

It's been over two years since I've written to The Beat. It's good to be back, and even better to crack open the latest issue (13.07) and recognize two familiar contributors: Nick Floyd and RJ Castillo. They remind me that this small beginnings, grassroots, not-profit mag is a wide, unwallled forum for those who are scattered all across America, separated by barbed wire and further divided by every class, cultural, and ethnic line imaginable. The Beat Without (The Beat Within as a whole) is a GRANTED, not a given, mini-community for those buried in our community's trash heap. And, sadly but honestly, more often than not, we buried ourselves...

When I initially stumbled on The Beat in 2002, it was a post-9/11, pre-Iraq War rhetorical cauldron, with every idea, ideology, and idiocy bubbling on its' pages.

On a personal level, The Beat became an outlet to undo some of my own idiocy. Granted, there is nothing cheesier than for a prisoner - especially a lifer - to be suddenly transformed into a know-it-all guru or an expert on life.

Personally, it was my failure at life that brought me to

prison in my late teens, a failure big-enough to keep me here for the rest of my earthly journey. So let me start there - as a fool who knows he is a fool, but who in his youth willingly and deliberately ignored the signs that pointed out my foolishness.

Now in my late twenties, I'm holding up that sign for others - particularly for the readers of The Beat - who have yet to succeed at the level of my folly. WARNING! DITCH AHEAD! Take it from the idiot who fell into it, but who didn't have to. Yes, I'm still muddy, and the stench is unmistakable - that's the price I have to pay. But I hope to be honest about it. Honest, for the sake of those who are already in the same slimy pit as me, for the sake of those who are headed there, and for the sake of those who are still clean. It's better to learn from the mistakes of others than from your own. Be smarter than me, and use your GOD-given freedom to stay away from the path that will lead you here, where the only right you have is 'The right to remain silent.'

Mikhail speaks from the heart and it touches us tremendously that we can still remain apart of his life and be that unwallled forum for him and YOU readers to share with the many who choose to pick up our weekly publication.

This weeks topics featured in this issue obviously not only were discussed in our weekly workshops, as al four topics are week in and week out, but the following topics as were presented in our workshops generated plenty of powerful writings.

Our first topic, "Accidents" — We all have had accidents in our lives. Tripping over and falling down on the ground is an accident. Stepping on another person's shoes without knowing is an accident. Do you remember a time you had an accident? Maybe it was a car accident? Or have you seen someone getting into an accident? What do you call an accident? Was getting locked up an accident? Or hurting someone's feelings an accident? This week we want to know about anything related to accidents — from small accidents to big accidents.

The second topic, "What Outrages You?" - What's going on in the world or in your personal life that makes you really, deeply angry? How does this outrage hurt you? Is it because you believe that something is basically unfair or cruel? Abuse? War? Prejudice? Is there anything about it that you, or anyone you can think of, can do to make it better? If so what? Or is this outrage so strong/intense that you think it's hopeless or permanent? Does it ever threaten you, personally? Describe for The Beat anything that totally causes you to feel outraged.

Lastly, "What Gives You Hope?" - When life seems bleak, desolate, or you personally are sad, depressed, in a funk, where or who do you go to when you want to feel there is still some hope in the world? Some people pray, others go to their mom or dad, some go to their best friend, or to those they trust. Others listen to their favorite music, watch TV, others walk around outside, go to the beach, woods, the movies, hang with their friends. Sometimes it can seem like nothing can help. So where do you go, who do you go to, when you need your feelings of hope restored? Tell us, what gives you hope.

Knowing the topics you now have a better idea of what kind of tone this issue will hold. By the way, we are also very impressed by all you writers who have stepped up and shared your life stories with us readers. Plenty of insight to be had, to say the least.

Until next week, but before we call it an editorial note we would like to dedicate this issue to our latest and newest fulltime player (employee) in Omar Turcios, who has stepped up huge at The Beat Within and in our office in general. Omar is here everyday, arriving early and leaving late, while helping with a huge chunk of the editing, the responding to the many-many pieces, the interns and their needs, and when asked, he's moving and shaking, making things better for the whole office in general. Great stuff OT!!

By the way, Omar has been associated with The Beat Within for over four years. He first found out about The Beat when he attended and participated in a Beat writing workshop in San Mateo County's Hillcrest Juvenile Hall. Today he is giving back, touching lives like no other. This issue is for you!

See you all next week!!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Omar Turcios

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Allan Tinker, Hanif Bay, Mark Schurmann, Amanda Ables, Dennis Morton, Karla Serrano, Sheerly Avni, Brittany Bernard, Perry Jones, Brenda D. Navarro, Samantha Navarro, Annie Wong, Victor Peterson, Elizabeth Crawford, Morghan Velez Young, Siliva Mortenson, Michaela Levin, Griffin Jones, Eric Lee, Andrew Barba, Estella Cisneros, Allen Huang, Nic Reiner, Angelica Zabanal, Charles Labanowski, Kolby Hanson, Chelsea Sprick, Akima Edwards, Alfred Dersidan, Karla Serrano, Victor Peterson, Angel Ryono, Carolyn Goosen, Alissa Blackman, Johnny Le, Allan Martinez, Hieu Bui, and Neela Banerjee.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecwski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County, New Mexico "The Land of Enchantment" Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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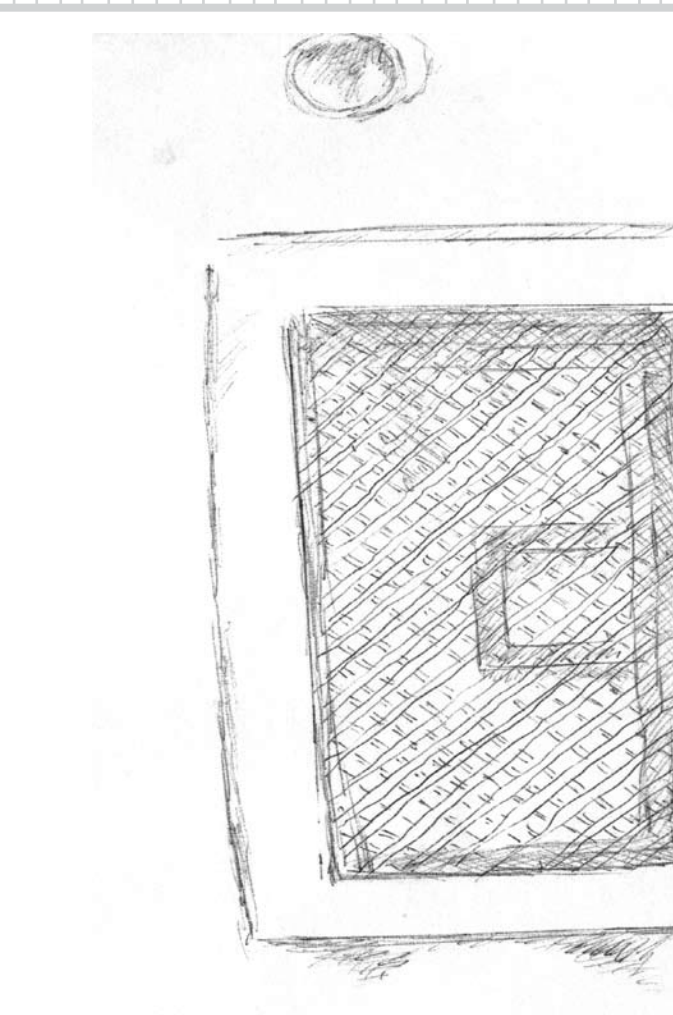
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The Beat Without 51



Be Evil And You Won't Fear Evil

Fear is what I saw for the very first time.

Looking evil in its eyes
watching my homie die.

He called for me but where was I?

Stuck on the streets
too busy gettin high.

Makin' money,
I had to get by.

Scared to look at him,
I knew he was dead.

I've never felt fear
Like putting my best homie to rest.

That's when I learned how to
make scared get out of my head.

Be evil and you won't fear evil, I said.

Those are the words
that never let me fear.

Those are the words
that stop the first tear.

Those are the words
that take away the sad.

Now without my homie
the hurt won't feel so bad.

RIP

Turtle, aka Scott

November 27, 2007

-Kelsey, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a very moving poem about a very painful event - losing a friend, especially in such a terrible way. But it's also about you. We want you to realize that it's normal to feel the way you do. But try to let yourself go through the pain. Mourn your friend. Cry, and keep crying as long as you need to. It's hard, but you'll get through it by opening up, not closing down. Talk about it, write about it. Then talk some more. And cry whenever you feel like it. We are sorry for your loss, and sorry for the pain your friend's family is surely going through. We know there is counseling available at the hall. Please take advantage of it. Talking and crying is your best therapy in a time like this.

Just A Thought

Just some thought running through my mind...

Is there something deep I'm trying to find?

I feel an empty hole within my soul.

It's trying to get away, but I won't let go.

It bothers me day and night

'Cause I can't quite make it into sight.

It's a blur in the back of my head

Tossing and turning every night in bed.

Is it a feeling or is it a person?

Always seems to be a different version.

Thoughts that spin round and round,

I pray to god I don't fall down.

Day by day it becomes more clear,

Listening, trying to hear,

Always looking up at the dates,

Praying and hoping it ain't too late.

But then again... it's just a thought.

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We love your poetry, Lefty. We think what you're listening for, what you're trying to hear, is god's reply to your prayers, which may be as simple (and as deep) as this: "If you fall down, get back up! Eliminate that phrase "too late" from your vocabulary! It is NEVER too late!" This is much more than "just a thought." What's going "round and round" in your head is you talking to you, telling yourself what you may not want to hear, but which you're much too intelligent to ignore. You may feel a hole in your soul, but this poem (and your other writing) prove that your soul is far from empty. It is kicking you into a higher and deeper level of thought, the beginning of a life-long journey of exploration and — we hope and believe — accomplishment. Keep thinking; keep writing; keep teaching!

What Hand

What type of hand
can turn the key
to open a shell
of sorrow?

Or does it take a kiss
to open the abyss
and turn the pain
from yesterday

into happiness tomorrow?

Always more -
greed is a whore.

More lies.

More money.

More anger, hate, and pain.

More corruption.

Who's to blame?

The greatest nation on earth -
an imposter since it's birth.

-Jackson, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: A nation is a large group of people. People who lead and people who follow. We understand your indignation. When questionable things are done in the name of "the people", and the people do not agree, it is the obligation of those who disagree to stand up and show us all a better way. We think you're in the process of rising from your seat. It takes a lot of preparation to lead effectively. You'll need a moral vision to replace the bankrupt policies you oppose. And you'll need to find the right words, if you want to help lead. Is this a challenge you're ready to accept? We hope you're doing a lot of reading. Wisdom is built on knowledge and experience. You get the knowledge from reading and careful observation and hard work. You get the wisdom from living a good life. Prepare yourself to lead, Jackson, if that's what you want to do. Start today, where you are.

What Outrages Me

What it is, Beat? Me, Ant, same shhh. tryna get out still...

What outrages me is how ninjas stay howlin' like "I'm a killa," or "I bust guns," but ain't about nothing on the streets.

What outrages me is how you a suspect just because you black or Latino.

What outrages me is how the "white man" just turns you down because where you come from, or yo' previous background.

What outrages me is how we make stupid-ass decisions and then, when you locked up, you realize yo' only friends is god and your mother.

What outrages me is how life is supposed to be for you to succeed, but living in these damn projects we don't do shhh but fail...

What outrages me is how people tell you that you ain't gone never be shhh, and seven times out of ten it comes true.

What outrages me is how some people wasn't made out of love, but was a mistake because their mother was a prostitute and didn't have enough damn money to get an abortion.

What outrages me is this whole damn world. Being in here outrages me.

-Lil' Ant, San Francisco

From The Beat: Far from outraging us, you amaze us! There is so much righteous rage here, so much passion and truth! What outrageous us is that in this, the richest and most powerful country the world has ever known, conditions that breed hopelessness and failure generation after generation are tolerated, while we can spend billions on foreign wars! We need your mind (and anger) to help individuals as well as the whole nation move from what you've described so well to something closer to what the Preamble to our Constitution promises, but fails to deliver. (If you haven't read it, you should.) If the prediction that "you ain't gone never be shhh" is true seven out of ten times, our prayer is that you are one of the three that turns that prediction on its head!

A Youngin With A Dream Like King's

I have a dream that one day this nation will understand themselves as people. Someday, people will realize that they can be solid in spirit instead of being hard as a stone all the time. Problems that occur will have a complex cause, none like the nonsense that we have seen in our societies today. I am well aware that it can be complicated for some of us to figure out who we are; however, we have to continue to push, push harder and understand that we are worth it. Let us raise out standards.

I have a dream that one day young men and women will understand the meaning of love. Love for our families, significant others, and our communities. The word love is not something we think of, it is something we feel. Young parents need to learn to stick together in order to raise the beautiful creation our lord Jesus has allowed them to produce. We have no more men to raise men; consequently, our young men are not able to become men.

I have a dream that one day our people will accept and appreciate change. Realizing that change can only help us as a whole in the long run will guarantee development within ourselves. All humans were created to evolve. If you don't evolve, you only slowly disappear. Today our youth are afraid of change, because they think it will make them look soft; therefore, we should not look forward to reproduction unless we learn to grow. If our youth will not cherish growth and self-development, the two options of jail and death will overrule "I have a dream today."

I have a dream that one day our young men will learn to be more about family and self. Homies are not all what they seem to be. The only security we have is family. Family love is unconditional; homies only love to a certain degree. Therefore, they will only support the things they agree with. Gangs only support ignorance and downward motion. Family will support any decision you make and encourage you 100%. There's no limit to the love of blood.

I have a dream that one day our society will take pride in our environments, and understand that it is not as poisoned as the media displays it to be. It is very evident that we are surrounded by a vicious creed of youngsters; moreover, there is indeed whole-hearted human beings walking the same streets as the beast. The activity going on in our neighborhoods are not to be criticized but understood. We have children who fall victim to the circumstances that are brought upon them; however, there are children who are products of their environment raised in the same lifestyles they are living today. We can make it if we choose to. For our youth there's still time to grow.

I have a dream that one day we will learn to keep it real with ourselves before anybody else. People are no longer strong enough to be themselves. Too many want to impress others. If people cannot learn to be all about self and family, then they will never learn to value their own life. If people do not learn to cherish self-development, they will never understand who they are...

-P. Crooks, San Francisco

From The Beat: We could hardly believe our eyes when we read this little masterpiece of deep thought and power. Just as we often felt after hearing Martin Luther King speak or read something he wrote, we want to jump up and yell, "Amen!" We hope that whatever brought you here will be resolved soon, because this country, this state, this city and our communities are desperate for the kind of leadership you could provide. But wherever you are, never stop growing and never stop teaching!

I Just Want My Emotions To Go Away

Is this life worth living? Some say yes and some say no. Well, I've been thinking about this question hella much lately. Sometimes I wish it was just all done and over with, but at other times I know I could never leave my baby girl, my best friend, and my boyfriend. Right now those are the three most important people in my life and I'd do anything for them, but it hurts so much that I can't see them.

I just want all my emotions to go away. I just don't want to feel any more. Feeling is the only thing that lets me know I still exist in this world, so I'm just wondering, "Is all this hurt worth it? Is this life worth living?"

-Blue-Eyed Angel, Marin

From The Beat: Even though you can't see these three people now that you're locked up, does getting some "time out" from all the feelings the drama of the outs can cause help you chill for a while? While you're in juvy, can you slowly create a plan for your life that will eliminate whatever brought you into juvy and help you get a fresh start? What do you need to do or stop doing to make your life serene, positive, creative, productive and fun?

Wonders Of Life

Pouring rain, clouds filled with sorrow
Mothers crying for their kids to come home
And where am I?

Standing under a tree drinking and getting wasted
Watching people come and go as rains soak into my toes
Watching my people leave 'til I am all alone
Lonely and cold... and why can't I go home?

I don't know.

Nothing physical, nothing emotional
Just the thought of being away from it all

I'm drunk, suddenly I start to fall

I hit a wall and that's it

Next thing I know I'm at home

Throwing up, trying to spit

But how did I get home?

It's in the mystery folder

I'm sure it was my guardian angel

Looking over my shoulder

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope you read this poem many times so you truly absorb its profound message. What you call your "guardian angel" (some would call luck) can't be relied on to save you the next time. No one is promised any more chances in life than those already given. Watching your people go until you are all alone, lonely and cold... Think hard about that image, Lefty. Don't allow yourself to disappear, to become nothing more than a memory. You have too much to gain— and too much to give!

When Will We Realize?

Most people don't understand the opportunities that they are given when they are on the outs. All these programs and jobs are laid out in front of us, asking us to accept one and put a little time into it so we could succeed and get our lives straightened out for the future.

And yet we all still end up here, refusing to grab a hold of what we will want when we age. I don't know how many times it takes for some of us to realize that we need to accept a new path when we get out, before we end up back here or with a tag on our toe.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is so right on that we wonder how long it's taken you to realize the need to take some of the help that's out there that will move you to a new path — and, therefore, to a new destination? We'd love to learn what you think is responsible for your insight and maturity? Is it the experience of being locked up? Something or things that you've read or heard? Just growing older? Whatever it is, we're just glad that your eyes are open. Never close them again! (We're also curious as to how you arrived at your Beat name.)

Hope

When I'm down and out thinking I'm all alone and no one has got my back, I think about family. My mom, who I only have known for about three years, now stays having my back. It's like whatever I'm going through, all I want is to hear her voice and I feel all right.

My older brother is one of the best things that ever happen. He's the one I look up to. Even though I don't always listen to him, I take his opinion to heart.

Then I got his baby moms who's always on my back to do better. She's always tellin' me to stop messin' up, stop messin' with the wrong people.

Then there's my niece who's gonna be three this year. I want to be there for her and be a good uncle. I need to change what I'm doin'. I can't be a role model locked up.

My family gives me hope. They're my fuel for change.

-Kevin, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is SO good, Kevin. With so many people at your back pushing you forward, you would be a fool not to seize this opportunity to make the changes you know you have to make in order to be the uncle your niece needs in her life, to be the sibling your brother and his girlfriend keep encouraging you to be, and to be the son your mother wants you to be. It's very obvious you have what it takes to do what you need to. But only you can do it!

Reading The Beat

When I'm locked up in Juvenile Hall, the day I sleep the best is Thursday, because the Beat Within comes, and when I read it in my room it puts me to sleep, because for me it's the opposite, when I read stuff that I like I get tired easily. The Beat is very interesting to me. When I wake up on Thursday all I think about is when is it going to be 8:00pm. It just makes me happy that people take there time to come out and let us write about how we feel and publish it so others can see. I love the Beat, I'm out.

- Beat Savage, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We love all you too! We love doing the work we do. We do it for all you that are locked up. You are always free to express what ever your feeling in The Beat Within.

My Hood

In my hood a lot of bad things be happening. People be getting killed and there be a lot of fights. I found out that there are no friends in this world.

The only good friend in this world is God. That is the only one you could trust. Being in jail is not a good place to be. A good place to be is with your family. Doing crime is not the right thing to do. The right thing to do is to be at home with your family. Being in the streets is not the right thing to do 'cause you could get hurt or killed in the streets of Oakland.

In the streets of Oakland there's a lot of killing. These streets are no joke. I have learned my lesson to be in jail. It is not a good place to be. I don't ever want to come back to jail. There was one time I was scared to walk down the street 'cause I thought I was about to get shot at for nothing. There are too many gangs in the streets of Oakland. They be coming up to you for nothing asking you what you bang.

When I get out of jail I want to make a change in my life.

-Jose, Alameda

From The Beat: The streets are ugly. You're right though if you wanna avoid getting in trouble or seriously injured then you have to stay inside your house and change things up big time. You have to avoid trouble. Chill with your family because they truly care for you. Go to school and get a part time job at The Beat. Leave the chillin' in the hood too. Dedication and determination is all it takes to change your life. You can do it.

Outrageous

What outrages me is this so-called justice system. Everything they do to so-called help just makes shhh worse. None of these out of home placements help. How can you teach someone to live positively in their neighborhood by removing us from our neighborhood? They should be integrating us back into our neighborhood. But all they do is remove us from our homes and families for a time, then we get back and they hope something is gonna be different. Ain't nothin' changed. We're still the same people in the same places, the same faces, and the same situations. And then they sit there and scratch their heads and wonder why we come back. Nothing drastic is going to change just because we're gone for an amount of time.

Despite all of these failures, the judges, POs, and all them continue to send us to these places with a smile on their faces, saying that it's gonna change us. But when we go out and mess up, they want to blame us for everything. They shrug us off and don't acknowledge that they also play a part in it.

A lot of these placements ruin our lives and ruin the few good and helpful relationships that we did have. It puts a strain on our families and separates us from them. They don't realize that we might act like adults, but a lot of people are still just kids, and instead of dealing with us accordingly, they treat us like we grown. The time they deal out does break some, but, yet, they continue to hand out these eighteen-month sentences for misdemeanors and send us hundreds of miles from home.

This is my fifteenth month in custody (November 2006-February 2008) for a crime I was given an eight-month max sentence for. Now that's outrageous.

-Birdman, San Francisco

From The Beat: The theory the authorities are probably working on when they send any of you youth away from home for months is that you'll get a chance to live in the rest of the world, so you can realize there's a whole 'nother world beyond your neighborhood, and/or to get you away from your homies, anyone who has a negative influence on you, who persuades you to mess up, so you can learn to rely on your own judgment. But you're right, tearing you away from your home, school, neighborhood can cause you to feel that you've lost almost all control over your own life, that now you have to learn to manage to live with strangers, and that can be totally frightening. Cutting you away from your family and the friends, maybe the only ones you've ever known, can be way counterproductive, because now you can feel that for the present, you have no one. So take a good look at yourself and ask yourself if you have made good choices before you came to the hall, at the hall, at the ranch? What must you do to succeed? Are you willing?

Imperialism Outrages Me

Imperialist capitalists countries makes me outraged. Where are we going in life, what are we trying to achieve? It seems that humanity is just trying to gain power, money and high positions in their countries.

Doesn't everyone chase after happiness? It seems as if we are tricked into believing that happiness and joy comes from material things, or power, pride, sex, etc. But true happiness and joy comes from within —a happiness that can never be stolen.

So what is it with our country acting like locusts and turning this earth into a wasteland? This outrages me.

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, VT! You have every reason and right to be outraged by the greed of governments, the greed of the military, the greed of individuals that make a mockery of religion by seeking personal wealth and power. You are so right, we are turning the earth into a wasteland. It's as if we care nothing for what we leave our children, as long as we get ours! Perhaps we are "tricked" into believing that this is where happiness comes from, but when we look around, we see how much people seem to want to be tricked. Very few people we know have the strength of mind that lets them analyze what they're taught as critically as you have done. Yes, it is outrageous!

The Start Of A New Life

Here I am in a place that I said I would never be, a place that I promise to everyone that I would never go. Yes I'm in the hall. Juvenile hall where bad is bad and good is bad. Most people would tell you the hall is the worst place you can be, but I must say that's a lie because in the hall is like being in school. You have someone telling you what to do and when to do it, but that's enough said. Let me tell you what happen.

Well were do I start, here I am at school the last period of the day. When the bell rang, I waited for my teacher to come collect my work. As I made my way to the door, I saw a familiar face. It was Charles, he's one of the best people that you could ever meet, at least that's what I thought. So I went up to Charles and slapped him high five. As we made our way to the front of the school, we met up with Marquis and Ramon, two friends of ours. Charles was telling us about this thing he wanted to do. He wanted to hit a lick.

You know how Marquis is, he says he will do it, but he always has to be home before his dad, and his dad gets off work at 4:30pm. We get out of school at 3:10 so he wasn't going. We all looked around waiting on the bus and then I just said, "let get some chicks and go to the movies or something." Me being the oldest of the group, they said ok. So here we are on the bus and we were on our way to Bayfair (Mall).

The moment we got off the bus we saw my potna Kev. So we all were on the way to see "The Eye" at the movies. So we got in line and you will never believe it, but the movie was sold out. So I was about to go home, then one of the guys said "Let's go to Southland Mall so I can get some shoes." So I thought I do need some new shoes, so we got back on the bus. We were on our way to Southland.

We were getting off the bus. We were on our way into the mall. We roamed the mall for a short while.

As we made our way out of the mall, Kev's grandma called him and said she was outside, so Kev asked if I needed a ride.

"Naw" I said.

Then Kev's grandma sped away, so we were down to the three of us.

Me, Charles and Ramon went to Union City to the movies. Man, it was so many people in the theatre that I started to change my mind and turn around and go home. Just as I started to the door I musta seen this bad lil' mama. Man, she had this nice pink skirt and a white tank top and those new Air Force Jordans, the pink and white ones.

So I turned around and asked her if her boyfriend was around. She said "no". So I asked her what movie she was about to see, she said, "oh I was going to see the 'First Sunday', but if you wanna see something else I'm fine with that."

So I look around for Charles and Ramon but they were already in the movie. So I said, "You tryna see 'The Eye'?"

She said it didn't matter, so we made our way into the movie. The first person I seen was Ramon, he's not that hard to miss he is 6'4", 325lb, so you wouldn't miss if you tried. Me and the girl walked pass Charles and Ramon, and sat at the end of the row.

As soon as the movie was over, we left.

Me and the girl went to In-and-Out burgers, Charles and Ramon went to the bus stop. I looked and asked the girl if she was hungry. She said a little, and I said,

"What you want?"

She said, "You didn't have to buy me anything. I don't even know your name."

I looked shocked, because I didn't tell the girl my name and I paid her way into the movies and was now about to buy her some food. Then I noticed I didn't know her name either. We both laughed and sat at the table. I said, "Well let me start, my name is Tommy, but you can call me T."

She said, "Ok T, my name is Kandice but you can call me "Candy."

She laughed as she said it. So we sat there and ate.

Then her mom called and said it was time for her to come home. Then the weirdest thing happened, she bent over the table and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

As we made our way out, I didn't seem to notice Charles or Ramon at the bus stop they were gone. So I went to the bus stop and look around.

Across the street was Charles and Ramon. They were talking to some kids. So I went over and they were running my way.

I looked up and spotted the bus, so we ran towards the bus, Charles handed me this phone, so I took the phone and he said he just took it from this boy, so I said, "I don't want this shhh if you just took it from that boy."

I looked up at the phone it was a Cingular. Then I said, "wait, you can get the card turned back on for cheap." So I took the card out of the phone and gave the phone to Charles. I don't know what he did with the phone.

Then I looked up and the bus was right there.

We went over and the bus driver said, "I'm not leaving for another 10 minutes."

I said ok and ran into the gas station. I saw the police and someone pointing my way. I paid no attention and kept walking towards the bus. The driver opened the door and Charles and Ramon got on first. When I started to get on the bus the police grabbed me and said, "Excuse me can we talk to you?"

I said, "All right."

They put me in handcuffs and said "Can you sit here for a minute?"

Then he read me my rights and grabbed Charles and Ramon off the bus, I knew I was going to jail because the officer kept pointing at me. They took me to Union City Police Station. Then they call for my mom, she wasn't at home. So they brought me to the hall. I stayed for about a week, then the judge said, "Now Mr. R... you understand that you committed a felony crime, right?"

I said, "Yes."

Then he said, "Mr. R... you understand that you will be held accountable for all the charges and penalization," I said yes then he continued, "you can be fined up to \$10,000 and the max time for your crime is 3 years."

I said, "ok."

And now here I am in a place that I said I would never be; A place that I promised to everyone that I would never go. Yes I'm in the hall. In the hall I pray, eat, sleep and shhh. I made a promise to myself, when I get out I will start a new life.

-Sticks, Alameda

From The Beat: We wish you luck on your case. Given what you wrote hear, we hope you get your chance to tell your story, it might lighten the penalty. We hope that you do start a new life and you don't have to ever experience any of these facilities again. Also, don't put yourself in a position where it might jeopardize your freedom once you are out and about. Solid insightful writing. You take us readers along for the journey that sadly brings you here, the hall.

...now here I am in a place that I said I would never be; A place that I promised to everyone that I would never go.

La Historia Del Camino

Yo les voy a contar lo que pase cuando me vine de Honduras. Pase tantas cosas tristes que cuando me acuerdo de ellas, me dan ganas de llorar.

Yo me vine con mi prima. Cuando veníamos por Mexico en Tierras Blancas, nos salio unos pandilleros y nos dijeron que les dieramos el dinero. Entonces nos hicieron poner las manos arriba y mi prima les dice, "no traigo nada, solo mi ropa interior." Y uno de ellos dice, "dámela!" Mi prima se la da y ellos se la tiran al suelo y también la tumban a ella al suelo.

Mi prima les dice que no le hagan nada y que les iba a dar la cartera. Ellos dicen que no querían la cartera y que la querían a ella. Ella les dice que porfavor no le hagan nada. Un amigo mío les dice, "no le hagas nada loco, yo tengo 100 Pesos." Ellos los toman y le dicen a mi amigo, "me dijistes que no andaba?" Mi amigo les dice, "es que lo ocupo para comer." Ellos dicen, "a mi no me importas que no tengas para comer y a esta morra me la voy a llevar." Yo dije, "hey pana, porfavor dejela ir porque ella es mi prima." El dice, "a mi me vale madre que sea tu prima culero, es más dame tu feria o sino me la llebo."

Eran unos cuantos pandilleros y nosotros eramos unos cuantos también. Les dije a los otros que no permitiramos que se la llebara quedito. Entonces un amigo sacó una nabaja y se la tiro a uno. Nosotros nos tiramos a los otros y a un pandillero fue puñaliado por un amigo mio. Entonces un pandillero sacó una pistola y le dispararon hasta matar a un amigo de nosotros. Cuando miramos que mataron a un amigo, nos corrimos. Gracia a Dios nos fuimos.

The Story Of The Trip

I'm going to share the story of what I went through when I came here from Honduras. I went through a lot of sad things that when I think about them, I feel like crying.

I came here with my female cousin. When I was in Mexico, in Tierras Blancas, a few gangsters appeared out of nowhere asking for our money. They asked up to put our hands up, and my cousin said to them, "I don't have anything, only my intimate clothes." And one of them replied, "give it to me." My cousin proceeded and gave it to them. They threw it on the ground and pushed her to ground.

My cousin kept asking to leave us alone and that she was going to give them her wallet. They said that they didn't want the wallet, but her. A friend of mine who was with us said, "hey don't do nothing, I got 100 Pesos." They took it and replied back to my friend, "didn't you tell us that you didn't have money?" My friend answered, "I did, but I needed it to eat." They replied, "we don't care if you eat or not, I'm going to take her with us." I said, "hey pana, leave her alone, she's my cousin." And he said, "I don't care if she's your cousin you punk, you know what, give me your money as well."

They were a few gangsters and we were the same amount of people. Quietly, I told the rest that we shouldn't permit them from taking her. One of us pulled out knife and threw it at one of them. We started fighting with the others and one of them got stabbed by one of my friends. Another of them pulled out a gun and shot until killing one of us. When we looked back, a friend of ours was killed. Thank god we got away.

-Tavo, San Francisco

From The Beat: It takes a lot of courage to do that. In reality, anybody would do the same thing you did for a family member. Although one of your friends died for that cause, it was the best thing to do. You never know what could have happened if you hadn't done anything. This must have been a hard moment and very desperate. This should teach you that big effort shouldn't been thrown away for stupid things that aren't worth it. If they give you a chance to stay here, keep in mind how hard it was for you to get here and all the things you suffered throughout your journey so you can appreciate life better. Thanks for your story even though it is sad it's also interesting. From interesting things, you also learn something that can help us in life.

A LOT OF OUTRAGE

What outrages me and makes me truly and deeply angry is when I'm at home minding my own business and my sisters -one older and one younger - make fun of me for being different. I would tell my mom, thinking she would help handle the situation. What she does instead is send me to my room (so she can handle the situation). When it happens the next day I stand up for myself and I get into trouble. This hurts me because I say things louder and more aggressive than they do so I face the consequences. I always feel that I get treated unfairly.

Right now I'm in juvenile hall 'cause my mom lied. I'm on house supervision and she and I and my younger sister were yelling and she called the house supervision and said I tried to kill the family. So again she lied and strikes yet another time.

When I lived with my dad 50-50, he would abuse us non-stop, and I got the worst of it. I would always protect my sisters when he was mad. I feel like me and my sisters are having secret war to get attention from mom or dad.

I've been in therapy since I was three years old. I've had over 20 different therapists. Only one had helped for 13 years of life but she left 'cause she got a better job offer from another group home. I feel my outrage is slipping out of my reach slowly eating at my chance of life. I'm doing all I can think of—therapists, counseling, group homes, juvie, anger pills, hospitalizations, and talks with friend and family, but so far nothing.

-Windi, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so sorry for all the pain your parents have caused you. We see that you are trying to make things better for yourself, and we hope you don't give up. In terms of how this has affected your relationships with your sisters, what do you think would help you become closer to them?

*All I can do is cry
and go to sleep.*

Dear God

Dear God I hope you can hear me.

The devil try to find me, protect me where ever I be.

I can't fight back,

I'm weak can't you see?

I wish you'd give me wings, so I can fly away.

I'm tired of the BS

Screw what everybody got to say.

All I want to do is pray every day that I can hug and hold my mother's hand

Or walk and talk with my girl on the beautiful sand.

Or communicate with my family whenever I can.

I'm 17 gGod please let me see twenty-one

Don't have my family cry and friends put me on a shirt.

Look at me I'm stuck in this place

Feel hopeless I talked to every night, you don't hear it?

In this place feeling like shhh.

All I can do is cry and go to sleep.

God please have mercy on me.

If you decide to lock me up, let my mind be free

And even though I'm your child, I'm still a G.

I will be some body in life, just wait and see.

-Tran, Alameda

From The Beat: You are somebody in life already, and anyone who doesn't believe it would just have to read this poem to understand what you have gone through, and how much love you still have in your heart. What can you do to keep that love and strength alive, no matter what the system decides?

Hope

I hope that I can change my negative ways.
Just like I hope Gods listening to my thoughts every
night that I pray.
I hope this pain ain't forever to stay.
Every time I pray I hope God sends me answer.
I hope my mom stands solid on the battle with her fight
against cancer.
Now locked up once again hopin' the judge send me
back to camp.
The truth is my heart is missin' somethin' like a letter
without a stamp.
I guess I took my freedom for granted.
I was at camp for two weeks and already caught a gang
enhancement.
But that was my choice to sacrifice.
I did what I did without thinking twice. I rolled the dice.
Now I'm back in the hall and it ain't nothing nice.
But there's still hope in this life. I hope God sends me to
heaven not hell.
I'm stressing hopin' all my mom's surgeries go well.
Yeah it was cool hittin' the hood for a min.
Showing the homies like what is it.
But in reality I'm in the unit, hopin' for a visit.
I hope I change for the better
I ain't tryin' to live my life on the street pushin' keys.
I want a wife kids a college degree.
But don't get it twisted homie I will always have my
respect n my loyalty.
My brother got a fight against parole I hope he wins.
Just got out last weekend after serving five years in the
pen.
I hope God gives my family courage, strength,
protection, guidance, and health.
I hope every time I run or do somethin' stupid, someone
just serves me some help.

-Lil' Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: You deserve help, respect, encouragement, you deserve a wife, kids, a college degree. You deserve all the things you hope and wish for. But now you must to believe it, believe in yourself, and then reach out for the help you need. You know all those programs they make you take as a condition of probation? Don't just do them because you "have" to. Do them with heart and soul, put the effort in, ask for guidance. You have many tests ahead of you, but this poem just burns with all the fire and, yes, hope, that you hold in your heart. Use it!

Death Before Dishonor

One of the rules I live by is death before dishonor. A lot of people can relate and the ones that can't are labeled as snitches.

One thing my mom always told me was never open your mouth when it can ruin someone else's life. She would know, she did a county bullet because someone opened their mouth.

Everyone that's older don't understand. They say that's the way to go, but when my mom was snitched on I lost contact with her for three years. Even though I was young those three years ruined our relationship forever. We were never close after she got out.

My aunties told me she use to treat me like an angel. She came back and treated me like shh. Some say tough love. I say a young teen kicked out 'cause my momma lost love for her son. It might seem complicated but if you walk in my shoes you would understand.

-Codine, Alameda

From The Beat: We can understand. And that's messed up that you lost contact with your mom for three years. You can't make up for lost time, but you can make up for what you got left. Obstacles are a part of life, and it's how we endure these struggles that really builds our character. You only have one life to live so make the best of it. And if you really want to make your relationship work between you and your mom let her know how you're feeling. You don't have anything to lose.

When Will It Stop?

Tell me when will it stop, all the murder and violence
Because every thirty minutes it's a moment of silence
That means everyday it's somebody in tears.
And every body got a pistol 'cause we livin' in fear.
The hood is a cold dark place with no smiles,
Task Force on my line because I fit the profile
White T-shirt, jeans and Nikes
Average black young male gold teeth and hyphy
So we need to man up to end ignorance for others sake.
Increase the peace and decrease the murder rate.

-Fantastic, Alameda

From The Beat: We really feel the power of these words. If every young man in Oakland took them to heart, that would simply be the end of the violence. Imagine it! On the other hand, we ask you to live these words and lead by example. Can you tell us something you've personally done to live up to the message of this incredible poem?

What's In A Name?

Some of you may wonder why I write under this name (Monk). I think some people think I am Buddhist, but I don't think of myself that way. Actually I don't know enough about Buddhism yet. I try to learn about all religions. I seek the truth.

My name was inspired by a monk named Kshitigarba. He was a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is just someone who vows to save everyone from suffering. Anyway, the story is that he would help lost souls to stop wandering, wherever they happened to be. He had the power to go anywhere he wanted, even hell, and help people by ending their suffering. Of course, though, Kshitigarba is too long of a name, but his story inspires me to counteract the depression so palpable in institutions.

I hope this inspires others to do the same, to help dispel the darkness. Let there be MORE light.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Amen, Monk. Amen!

Joy Ride...

Another six days. As I walk out of the courtroom, that's what I'm telling myself. They say I have a bench warrant out of town. As soon as I'm done here I'm being expedited to the hall back there. Who knows how long I'll be there? Who knows - the next 9-12 months of my life rests in the hands of a judge who has apparently had enough of my thrill rides.

I have flashbacks of me and my girl. I would love to hold her in my arms, to feel the comfort and love of her. I know it's going to be hard trying to convince everybody that I'm truly sorry for my actions, and that I take full responsibility for what I have done.

I never thought a night of fun would cause so much heartache and tears and drama. It's like Immortal Technique said, "If the devil asks you to dance, you better say never, 'cause a dance with the devil might last forever".

-Robby, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Robby - try imagining this. The car you choose to take a 'joy ride' in might belong to a mom who has to rush a sick child to the emergency room, or it might belong to a guy, like you, trying to get his act together. He's searched for months and finally, someone gives him work. The deal is - he can never be late. He leaves his house, planning to drive to his new job BUT - where's his car. What we're asking you to do is to consider what the consequences are when you jack a car. You're taking a risk. As foolish as that is, you get to make that choice. But you're depriving other folks of their right to choose, and in some cases, the consequences could be very costly to them and to their families. That's a choice you do not have a right to make. If you want to be dumb enough to hurt yourself - we're sorry. We wish you wouldn't. But hurting others - that's a big NO. End of lecture. We do hope you've learned something from these sorry experiences. And we wish you well.

I Didn't Feel Nothin' But Anger

What's up Beat this your boy Crazy writing you once again. I'm gonna write about my whole life story!

When I was 10 years old I used to watch my older brother Marcos smoke cigarettes and steal stuff from stores and beat people up, until he got locked up!

After that I guess my life was fine. I used to go school, and I help my mom around the house. My father had his other family and his own kids with my step mom and I never spent time with him because every time I go to his house my step mom would hit us and tell us that our dad is not our father. Then she would call our mom foul names, so I really didn't need nothing from him. Until when I did need shoes he would tell us that he didn't have money and that to don't ask him no more! So I really didn't get nothing from him, and on my mother side she used to work two jobs to keep a roof over our heads, so I wouldn't really ask her for anything because I already new she was struggling with money and I knew what the answer was.

I used to go to school with my shoes all ripped up and my mom would get our clothes from church! Because she didn't have money!

But I was a happy kid, until I turned 11 years old. I used to hang around with the kids that got my brother locked up! Don't get me wrong they're my ninjas till this day. Their names was Vincent and Michael and Criss... we used to go Radio Shack and steal hella remote control cars. We used to just walk in and see what we like and just pick it up and start running out the store. One day I was sitting on my steps when my potnas was smoking a black and I asked them to let me hit it one time.

After that I was smoking Newports and hella weed. We used to stand on our spot in front of the liquor store and wait for the next suspect.

After I turned 12 years old Criss went to camp and ran, and caught the train to Nebraska and I thought he was gone forever. And Vincent and Mike moved houses with his dad to Tracy and I never seen them again.

After that my life was perfect again. We went back to the good thing - school and all that good stuff. Then I met some ninjas name Richard, Martin, Jesus and Angelo. We used to go same thing my old friends did, but we wasn't in gangs. We used to take stolen cars to school, park them and walk in school like if they was our own cars.

You think we went to school to learn? Well you're wrong.

I used to go to school to see if you would put five on some weed or on my gas tank. One day I was driving to school and I passed a red light and the cops seen me. I high-speeded it and crashed into a house. That was my first time in jail. It hurt to see Mom cry on my visits but that didn't stop me. I got caught 5 more times for Grand Theft Auto. I was 13 years old at this time after that I start doing serious stuff like take people money and beat them up and again I got locked up and released on home supervision. I was staying home and following orders, until one day I had a stolen car and I was going home and I seen one of my potnas, and he said like this "Blood, I know where a lot of stereos we could make a lot of money." Well I got caught again and went to jail.

At this time I was in a gang but I never did kill someone I used to just beat people up. Well when I got caught I went to a group home and I did good in it. My mom did ever thing to have me go to the right path. Well after that I finish the group home and that's when my life fell apart.

My old friends Criss, Mike and Vincent came back... This time we would ride around all the way to Concord or Berkeley and steal laptops, steal speakers, steal stereos.

And one time I broke a car window, hopped in it and took the stereo out. After I took it out I searched the car and found a laptop. I hopped out the car and got into my ninjas car and we drove away. I started searching the laptop bag I came up with an Apple laptop and I was going to throw the bag away until one my ninjas was like "No, let me see the bag." I gave it to him he kept searching it until he found a little pocket in the cuts -- he pulled out a envelope full of money. Not one but three stacks of envelopes full with money!

We counted it and it was a couple thousand cash. We split it four ways each. After that life was good I never asked my mom for shoes or pay my phone bill. As the matter of fact I gave her money for rent or money just for the little stuff.

She would tell me "Son, where are you getting this money from?" with tears on her eyes. And I would say that people owed me money... but of course she didn't believe me at all. But after that I turned fourteen years old and my brother Marcos came out of jail. He had spent four years in CYA, and after he found out all the things I did he didn't like it.

He used to have me on check. But I never did stop what I was doing so he just left me alone.

He would tell me like this "One day you're going to do something stupid and you're going to end up like me." I used to tell him no, but in my head I was like, I know. Well after that was where serious parts started.

I used to walk around my hood with a stack of money in my pants a nine millimeter berretta on my waist and a whole zip of weed in the cuts, and numerous pills.

At this time I was drinking, popping pills and snorting hella coke. I used to have many different females that gave me whatever I wanted. Life was good!

Well one day we was riding around smoking, slapping hard and we stopped with some females I knew. They told me they was having a sweet sixteen birthday party up in a hood we don't go to. I was like "Naw, that's passing my line all the way over there, plus I don't have my thang."

Well we decided to go over there like some dumb asses and we end up getting shot at. I got shot one time on my leg, no serious damage.

You know what's next: We go on a mission, call it a day, go home, smoke a blunt, and get with my females, if you know what I mean. I turned fifteen years old and got tattoos, my dots, and RIP Homie tatted up. I got locked up for possession of a firearm I did time, got released to another group home. I ran, I got a warrant. I don't go to school and my life was going down but I didn't care.

One day we was at a party and out of nowhere someone comes and stabs me in my stomach and I went to the hospital. Now I got shot, stabbed and I just get stronger and have no remorse for people. When I would go home I showed love to my little brother and told him to do good, not like me. My sister went to college and finish. My other sister had a job and she takes care of business and yes my sister bangs too, and my older brother.

But they wasn't that crazy like me and my brother. My dad tried to come back in our lives, even though it was too late for that. I turned him down. I told him my father was my brother, and my mom was my only thing in my life! My brother didn't stop me for what I did -- he just showed me how to do it the right way. He even put in work with me once.

Everything I seen was too much to think about. I had people get shot in front of me. People died in my face... but it never came to my mind to stop doing the stuff I was doing. It just got me deeper. My homies started dyin' and going to jail for twenty-five years.... Like Mike, the one I

continued from previous page

grew with since I was ten years old. Vincent is doing five years for attempted murder.

I didn't feel nothing, just anger. Now I was sixteen years old doing the same thing ...more funerals, more people going to jail, stuff like that. The only time I was in peace is when I was home with family.

With my hood I won't have to look over my shoulder every five minutes. I don't got to wear a bullet proof vest everywhere I go. I'd just show love to my family when I was around. My mom never knew what I was doing ... only my brother knew, because I'd brag about what I did every time I got home.

My brother is almost an OG so he knows what's up.

One day I was dreaming that I was locked up and I went to court and my mother was crying. I woke sweating, and when I opened my eyes there was the SWAT team with guns to my face and M16s to my face. They took me downtown. They tried to interrogate, but I pleaded the fifth and they just was getting madder and madder. One of the homicide officers tried to throw a chair at me, but I was not going out.

They let me go after three days because they didn't have evidence on me. But it was a matter of time before I went away for a long time.

I knew some one was snitching but who? I never knew. I went back to the same stuff. Now it was me, my boys, and a couple of homies riding around in the sideshow looking for trouble. We found one of the enemies riding around the hyfee train but we didn't know the whole hyfee train was our enemies. We thought half of the cars was probably black people but I was wrong 12 cars was nothing but Mexicans. We wasted all our ammunition on one car and smashed off and I didn't notice, like eight cars coming fast stop next to us and started popping like seven different guns. Probably more!

Pop ,pop ,pop ,pop...! Boom, boom, boom, boom...! I thought I was dead.... We didn't have no more bullets so we just stood there on a red light under the seats. When everything was over I heard some one say "We out, smash off!"

I heard sirens coming, I got up from under my seat and said, "Angelo, Guero, Chendos, y'all cool?"

Angelo said "Naw blood, I got shot. Take me to the hospital."

We smashed off with all windows busted. We dropped Angelo off at the hospital and left to my ninja's house. When we got out the car I couldn't believe it. The car look like a cheese with hella holes. They probably fired like a hundred times. I actually counted like close to thirty of them, but I think it was more than that.

I looked on the back seat where me and Guero was sitting and there was like six bullets holes on the head rest.

My skin of my arms and neck started to get cold and my hairs was standing up. I was like damn that could of been my head and my chest. In the morning Angelo called me and I was like, "You good my ninja where you got shot?"

He was like, "My legs. It's good though, I'm going home today."

I was like, "I'm gonna go to your house, and when you get out I'm gonna burn one, and I need to talk to you."

He was like "Naw ninja, I need to talk to you."

I said about what? He was like, "Homicide came over when I was sleeping and asked me how I got shot."

I was like, "what you tell them?"

He said, "I told them that they try to rob me."

I was like, "It's good I'll holla at you later ninja."

We hung up the phone. I got dressed and went to the living room. My brother was smoking on the couch.... He loved waking up in the morning, eatin' some eggs and

bacon with bread and have a smoke right after that.

I was seventeen years old now I did the same over and over again. Sometimes I think to myself what I want to do with my life? Do I want to finish school? Should I stop banging? Would I get killed?

And then that second thought that came to me -- what would my family do if I got killed?

Then that third thought came: Oh well you only live once.

Well all that changed when I got caught for attempted murder in broad daylight. I was standing at my patna's house smoking when a van passed by. School was getting out and the van spotted us and one of them pointed at me and my homie with his finger, talking to the man driving.

I told my patna "A' go get that thang, they're going to come back."

Well sure enough, they came back hella deep ...one of them ninjas got out the car and shot like four times, but he didn't hit us. I think he was just trying to scare us.

My legs was shaking, but he got up and ran to the van and the car tried to smash off, but it was too late. I had already shot my potna's gun like eight times. When they smashed off, I guess one of them got grazed a couple times, once on his shoulder and other in his arm.

When they was on the way to the hospital, they was passing stop lights and the police seen them and stopped them.

Well, one of them that got shot told 'em someone shot him. The cop called the ambulance and the cop told one of the other friends from the one that got shot "What happen and where?"

The other person told the cop that he would tell him everything the happened and he got into the back of the cop car. My dumbass was on the crime scene still, but I changed my clothes, took my black sweater off, and let my hair loose, and I pissed on my hands so the gun powder would go away. At that time the cops drove in the parking lot I was in, and I seen someone in the back seat, that's when I was like oh shhh.

They pulled out a shotgun and a fortyu cal at me and told me to get on the ground.

You know the rest I went to jail and yes they came and testified against me in court. I took a deal because I was going to the Y for four years. My max is sixteen years that helped me a lot. Now I'm going to ROP Nevada and I'm doing eighteen months over there. I hate seeing my mom cry on my visit and I'ma try to change the shhh I do, but I ain't going to change who I am.

I'm gonna bang 'till I die. For all the people that be crying about EM or group home or camp y'all got it good!!! Very good! My ninja Mike is doing twenty-five with an L right now. It can't get no worse than that. And for all them people that is looking at serious time, just keep yo'head and do the time don't let the time do you! You feel me? Y'all still got a good chance.

Today I had a dream about me at home with my family and what woke me up was school time.

Shhh, I'm still in jail. Oh well. Well ,Beat that's my story I'm out.

-Lil' Crazy, Alameda

From The Beat: We're proud of you for stepping up the way you did and telling your story with such heart. You didn't hide from the ugly parts but you didn't glorify them either, instead you just wrote the truth of how you came to be the young person you are today, with all the right and wrong you've faced and done. We shuddered at all those vivid images. You know what hurts? What hurts is that you and your friends, some of whom are loyal and talented contributors to The Beat each week, love each other, try to watch each other's backs, yet you lead each other into death and destruction. Think of all the suffering that came from that day you went looking for trouble. **ON BOTH SIDES.** Think of all that family suffering. You say it's not too late for the people reading this, at the end of your piece. But Raul, it's not too crazy for you either.

Alcohol And It's Influence

Well, it's Yogi again. This time I'm here to talk about my drinking problem, and its history.

My forefathers said to drink not too excessively of the white man's firewater (alcohol), for it could turn a good man into a whimpering fool. I know now what it is that they meant.

Indeed, it is true, alcohol can do all types of things to the person drinking it. Alcohol has done a number of things to me.

Because of the excessive alcohol drinking I've been doing, I've become a very forgetful person. I've actually lost a great amount of memory cells already. Nowadays, I forget about stuff that happened just two minutes before. The memories eventually return, but I have to try really hard to remember.

Most of the things I used to know, school-wise, I've forgotten. Well, actually this was not all caused just by alcohol, I also smoke a lot of weed.

Some other things that alcohol does for me is that sometimes in the mornings I wake up cold and shivering, my arms and legs shaking a lot.

Well, it's not as bad as with my uncle, but it's pretty bad.

I also have slight heart problems. Like when I exercise or do a lot of laps in gym class, my heart starts to beat too fast. I lost stamina, so I get tired very easily now. With running, I can do only so many laps before I get short on my breath and start wheezing. The wheezing may also be caused by the excessive smoking.

Once I start wheezing I get little sharp pains in the heart, that feels like it's getting poked by sharp needles.

Alcohol doesn't really do anything for me, health-wise. Actually, it doesn't do anything for anybody health-wise. You may think alcohol is doing something for you, but that's just while you're drinking it.

I used to think that way too. I thought "Well, hey, I'm kicking it with the homies, let's get drunk!"

I didn't think it could hurt me. I thought, "Hey, you get drunk this night, and then wake up next morning. How bad can that be?"

Now, sitting here in my cell, I think "Damn, what if I had gotten so drunk one day, and never woke up to see another day?" You see, that's how it is. One minute you're finishing your second shot, the next minute you're downing a whole bottle. Before you know it, you're drunk off of one bottle and a half, maybe two bottles and you say, "Screw it, let's go do something!" Most likely that "something" ends up being something stupid, not to mention dangerous.

So you and your patnas go on what you guys call a 'drunk mission'. Maybe you go steal a car or two. Probably, you'll go and 'pull licks' on an innocent person. Think about it, you're drunk and trying to rob an innocent person. What if that innocent person turns out to be not so innocent? There you are, a stupid drunk kid, trying to rob a person you think has nothing to defend themselves with, all of a sudden you're being stunned by a gun pointed directly at you. Whose fault do you think it would be if you ended up dead?

I know I may not be the preferred one to be talking, seeing as I'm locked up right along with you, but, well, I'm just trying out some advice so that anybody can learn from my mistakes, instead of learning the hard way. It is always

good to have a helping hand there for us when we need it.

Well, I started drinking at age 11. I had my first shot of some malt liquor, beer, when I was nine, but drinking really caught on when I was 11. I was a pretty big eleven year old, so I was able to handle drinking some of the hard stuff. Whenever I drank, I started off sipping on the drink. Soon enough, I'd get tired of holding the full cup, so I'd chug it. Chugging a drink was always a big mistake with me. Once I've chugged that first drink I start to feel in the mood. That's when I grab the bottle and start drinking straight shots. Pretty soon the bottle is gone and I realize it.

So, I chill for a while, until I start craving another shot. That's when I feel anger shoot through my body and I get aggressive. I get up to look for another bottle, and stumble and fall. This whole time I've been sitting down. If you've ever drank sitting down then you know, as soon as you get up, that's when the alcohol starts kicking in.

So, I finally get on my feet. I'm feeling really hot, so I tear my shirt off, all the while with a droopy, drunken face, stumbling. I'm not really thinking right, out of nowhere I laugh to myself. That little giggle starts an all out laugh attack. I just stand there, stumbling, laughing like a maniac.

Suddenly, I end up with tears flowing down my cheeks. Tears of remembrance, tears of pain, of remorse. And then I let myself fall to the ground, all out bawling. Not too long after that, I get back up, still struggling with my drunkenness. My head starts spinning, throbbing all the while, and I black out. All I really know is that I've magically grown 10 times stronger, at least that's what the alcohol makes me think. While drunk, time seems to pass by at lightning speed. One minute I'm drunk, then I black out, all of a sudden I'm waking up on one of my homies' couch.

That's why it's a good thing to keep it with your homies around you. Because, you never know what you could end up doing while in a drunken stupor. You might pass out on the street, or black out and almost get ran over and killed. You never know, you could end up killing yourself!

I think that the worst part about drinking is that when you drink, most likely you end up drinking so much that you eventually black out. While being in a blackout, your mind is not capable of functioning right. You have all the alcohol molecules controlling your brain.

While the alcohol is controlling your brain, it is also controlling the decisions that you make. Therefore, I tell you guys, and girls, be careful with alcohol. It can really hurt you and your body. Most of all, it can have a really big impact on your life. I've seen people that I really care about and love get their lives completely ruined by alcohol. I've seen them so messed up by it that they eventually just wasted away and died, still under the influence.

Me, I've already decided to quit drinking, I just hope I have enough fortitude to follow through. For all you drinkers, I hope you also decide to quit this dirty habit and kick it to the curb.

-Yogi, Alameda

From The Beat: Yogi, this is an extraordinary chronicle of the way the disease of alcoholism has ruined the early years of your adulthood. Reading it makes us think of all the times we've taken drunkenness for granted, or casually said "man you need to quit" You turn up the volume on the urgency... You make us go through it with you, and you make us feel how hard it is to say no once you get started. We hope you seek out and get the support you need to break free of its power for good.

While being in a blackout, your mind is not capable of functioning right. You have all the alcohol molecules controlling your brain.

Mi Historia Es

Un día sali de mi casa buscando una mayor vida para mí, para poder prosperar en mi vida y la verdad es que para venir aquí sufrí mucho. En primer lugar, abandonar a mi familia, luego salir de mi paiz, de mi tierra querida, abandonar a mis amigos, y seguir una ruta muy difícil hasta subirme al tren por primera vez llenos de miedo. Yo nunca pensaba pasar esto en mi vida. Nunca pense aguantar mucha hambre para poder llegar aquí a los Estados Unidos.

Vine aquí para ser alguien en la vida y que nadie nos humille por nada.

Me gustaría servir a Dios pero servirle de corazón, como es debido. Sin El no somos nadie en esta vida.

Quiero ayudarles a mi mamá y a mi familia para que ellos no sufran como yo. También estoy aquí para que el día de mañana si Dios quiere y me lo permita y tenga un hijo que tenga todo y que él no sufra. Quisiera darle lo mejor y aconsejarlo que no tome un camino malo.

From The Beat: Es muy duro dejar todo por una buena vida. Lo entendemos. Lo que nosotros no entendemos es porque ustedes se meten en cosas que les quitará el privilegio de vivir aquí y poder superarse despues de haber sufrido mucho. Ahora ya es tarde para volver el pasado, pero no es tarde para poder cumplir tus deseos. Hay mucho tiempo. De los errores aprendemos y esperamos que tu hayas aprendido bien de tu error. Busca a Dios y pídele de corazón que te de la fuerza que necesitas para salir adelante en buenos caminos. Alejate de las cosas que te vayan a traer a este mismo lugar. Hay mucho trabajo mejor que el que llama ser trabajo.

My Story Is

One day I left my house searching for someone better, to succeed in life and the truth is that I suffered a lot to accomplish what I wanted. In first place, I left my family, my country, my lovely land, and my friends. I took trip over a hard road and getting on a train risking to loose a part of my body. I never thought of going through any of this in my life. I never thought of suffering so much hunger to come to the U.S.

I came her to be someone in life and prevent someone to humiliate us from anything.

I want to serve God with all my heart like it is supposed to be. Without Him, we are nothing in this life.

I want to help my mom and family, so they won't suffer like I did. I'm also here so tomorrow when I had a kid, I can provide all and never let him to suffer. I want to give him the best and guide him to a good road.

-Francisco, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's hard to leave everything for a better life. We understand. What we can't understand is why you mess with things that will take away the privilege to live here and be able to succeed after going through so much. Now it's too late to change the past, but it's not too late to accomplish your dreams. There's plenty of time. We learn from our mistakes and we hope you learned from yours. Keep looking for God and ask Him with all you heart to give you the strength you need to succeed in good roads. Get away from bad things that can bring you back in here. There are better and honest jobs that the one you call a job.

Full Of Rage

The things that's going on in my life that gets me angry is why pops left. It hurts me because I got to learn things on my own. I don't have any body to help me with my mistakes. Or somebody I could talk to.

There's really nothing to make it better because I am already learning from my mistakes. I think I could deal with it now. I am already growing up. Now I got brothers to tell them what's right or wrong. That's what makes me proud. Being in here might change my life.

-Gabriel, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope you do change your life and grow up to be the man that you want to be. You do need to be out there guiding your brothers and show them what's right from wrong. They need a positive role model in their lives and that positive person should be you. So, don't let anything stop you from doing what you need to do. Learn from your mistakes and teach your brothers that way they won't make the same mistakes you made.

Lo Qué Es La Vida

Pues en realidad para mí la vida es algo muy difícil de comprender. Pues uno en algunos momentos tiene problemas en los cuales se sienten acorralado y muchas veces no encontramos la salida aunque esté a nuestra vista la solución de dichos problemas.

En muchos caso,s tomamos decisiones muy precipitante las cuales los traen muchas complicaciones. Por eso tenemos que estar seguro de nosotros mismos y tener fe en Dios que es él quien toma las decisiones y nos ayuda a salir adelante.

Muchas veces uno tropieza y cae pero hay que luchar por lo que queremos y levantarnos de nuevo. Y más decididos que nunca hay que aferrarnos al pasado, el pasado es el pasado y eso nadie lo va a cambiar. Hay que salir adelante. Pase lo que pase la vida sigue.

Recuerda siempre hay una resconpenza por tus actos. La vida es una caja de sorpresa y hay que estar preparados para lo que venga. Que Dios te bendiga.

From The Beat: Gracias port us palabras tan sabias. Esperamos que esta palabras las tengas en mente y la apliques en tu vida porque la realidad es que la necesitas. ¿Y tú has pensado en luchas despues de los tropiezo que te ha dado la vida? Nos dijistes cosas que son muy interezante y a la vez verdades, pero también nos gustaria saber sobre tus planes, tu futuro, tus pensamiento en como enderezar tu vida. ¿Será po sible?

What Life Is

In reality, for me life is something very hard to understand. We all have problems in some moments in life that make us feel intimidated and sometimes we can't find the way out even if those solutions are right in front of us.

In some cases, we make precipitant choices way that bring us a lot of complications. That's why we have to be sure of ourselves and have faith in God who is the one who has the right to make decisions and help us to move on in life.

A lot of times we trip and fall, but we have to fight for what we want and get up again. And we have to be sure, like never before, that the past is the past and nobody can change it. We have to succeed. Whatever happens, life continues.

Remember that there is an award for every action. Life is like a box of surprises and we have to be prepared for whatever comes. God bless you.

-Marvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for your wise words. We hope you also keep these words in mind and apply them to your life because you really need it. Have you thought about what will you do after all the trips that life has give you? You've shared things that are really interesting and true, but we would also love to hear your future plans, thoughts in how to straighten your life. Is it possible?

Hope And Support

What's up with The Beat? Chea, its your boy, Lil' Rob mang, holdin' it down, still up in here.

Someone that I go to when I feel that there is hope around right now is my lawyer, social worker and my family. These people are supporting me a "hunet" percent right now, showing me that I still have hope, even though I'm going through a lot of bs right now.

They played me, and the judge made her decision to send me to Log Cabin Ranch for a year, but I ain't tripping though. I still got hope right now because my lawyer, social worker and family is going to keep on supporting me no matter what I'm going to have to go through.

Well Beat, that's all I got for y'all today. I'ma cut this off.

-Lil' Rob, San Francisco

From The Beat: We always appreciate reading a piece that recognizes that there are people trying to help, even when they can't succeed all the time. Do you think these people are standing behind you because they see something in you that gives them hope for your future? What will you do so that you don't let them — and yourself — down?

First Day In Juvie

I'm tired of being here already, and I have only been in here since yesterday. When I woke up, I thought I was at home for a minute, but then the speaker said, "Get up! Fold your blankets. Get ready for school!"

I felt bad because I could be at home, because I got suspended from school because of the same incident that got me in here. I might be getting out tomorrow if the DA doesn't press charges, but if they do, I'll be in here until my court date.

I had to wake up earlier than I do at home. At home, I don't have to wake up 'til 8:30, because my school started at 9:15. After I get out, I plan on not coming back over here.

It makes me feel sad being in here, because it's making my mom sad and my family sad.

-Mase, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know what "incident" got you here, but you know, so you also know what you must avoid in order to stay out of here. Far too many "first-timers" promise never to return, but find it hard to keep that promise once they get out. So don't forget how you're feeling now, and how what you've done has affected your mom and family (and you). Coming here for the first time may not be so bad, if it also means it's the LAST time!

Outrageous Parents

The thing that really makes me so mad is when people find out that I have both of my parents. The first thing people say is you lucky that your parents are still together.

But the part that I hate about it is because all they do is argue, to be married for so long and spent so much time with each other. They suppose to be able to get along with each other better. But the thing that pisses me off about my parents is they don't just argue, when they do, they have a problem with getting me involved and tryin' to have me choose sides.

The way I look at the whole situation is if they gone do so much arguing, why be together? Every time I turn around they at each other throats. It's like an every day routine to them. But it will be a lot easier if they took a little time off because when they together its non-stop. If I choose one side the other parent will get mad and if I ask for something they will tell me to ask the one I sided with.

-Ricky, Alameda

From The Beat: Sounds like a lot of mayhem going on in your house, but you are lucky in a sense that you do have both of your parents. Most of your peers probably only have one parent and if not then they probably have none; Maybe because they are locked up, dead, or because they just simply abandoned their kids. Some of your peers have no parents and would rather have two arguing parents than no parents. Maybe you should tell your parents to go get some counseling and to focus on trying to raise you instead of arguing over petty things. Or, we suppose separating is the best solution for all.

What Gives Me Hope

What give me hope when I'm down is when I think about my family and my future. First, my family gives me hope because every time I'm locked up and I don't have anything good to look forward to, it's always good to hear from or think about them just to keep it going.

And also what gives me hope is thinking about my future, because every time I think about the dreams I want to fulfill, that's what I keep in my head for motivation.

-Leonard

From The Beat: Good for you, Leonard. We would love to read about some of those dreams that give you motivation, and how you plan to achieve them.

Struggles

Sometimes the things that seem to hurt us the most are the very things that bring out the best in us and in life period.

They are the struggles that help us discover the faith we thought we'd lost the courage to let go of the past and begin again and again.

Because challenges help us to see who we really are, where we want to go, and what our lives can be if only we have faith and keep on trying and trying.

Last but not least, never ever give up at all.

-Derik, Alameda

From The Beat: You're absolutely right. Life is all about struggles and how we deal with them. Struggles help us build our character and only make us stronger. Setting goals for our selves and overcoming the obstacles that stand in our way is what defines determination. Never give up! You have to struggle and strive to succeed. Life is not easy!

I'm Tired

I'm tired of waking up in the morning.

I'm tired of eating when the food comes to the unit.

I'm tired of taking a shower when its time.

I'm tired of coming out to activity when the staff tells us.

I'm tired of using the same clothing every day.

I'm tired of looking at the same walls every day.

I'm tired of juvenile hall,

I just want to go to YA alternative and do my time and get out and have a new life.

I want to stop the tears that are coming down from the eyes of my family!

-Gonzalez, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We know it must be difficult to lose all your freedoms when you come to juvenile hall. It must be even harder to see how much what you've done has hurt your family. We're glad that your family's pain is motivating you to change your life and we hope some of that motivation comes from your own desire to be happy and lead a successful life. We're glad you wrote this piece and we hope that you being tired of being in here keeps you out of trouble when you get out.

Another Day In The Hall

Many secrets I hold.

Open up your ears as my story unfolds.

Stress and drama, all in my face.

If I could I would fly away into space.

I'm stuck in the struggle with friends where my crazy life begins.

In the pen is where it ends.

OG's become a couch.

I'm lost in a maze.

I can't see through the fog.

My girl's about to have a baby, so it's hard.

I played the game.

Now I feel like I got hit by a train.

The system treats us like trash.

I wish these windows were glass.

But that's all a dream.

God forgive me for my sins,

You're the only one who sees my pain.

My life's all a big mistake.

-Oscar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Oscar, our lives are complex and sometimes present us with sets of conflicting loyalties. We know just a little bit about the difficulties you are facing. We think you should consider that your first loyalty might be to attempt to lead a life that is true to yourself. We know there are codes you are told you cannot break. But the truest code is to be as humane and loving as possible. You owe it to your family and to yourself to behave in a way that will do the most good for you, for them, and for anyone who has been hurt by your behavior.

Accidents Happen

What I call an accident is why I'm in here. It was an accident because of the simple fact that somebody did something and blamed me for the dirty work that he did. Because he knew that I was not going to say that it was him. So he told on me. Now I'm in juvenile hall for something somebody else did.

I'm gonna let these days pass me up because of one of my so-called patnas wanted to point me and my house out. But it's good I'm gonna do my time and just get out 'cause I know the bigger man never snitch, no matter how much time they try to throw at you. You never suppose to run your mouth even if he snitched on you. Do your time get out and be a bigger man, somebody who not gone run they mouth.

I think an accident is somebody that snitches on you because of the consequences that he will have to suffer when you get out.

-Lil' Co, Alameda

From The Beat: That's a messed up situation to be in. That goes to show you that you can't trust anyone when it comes to this on the edge lifestyle. Your so-called friend ratted you out because he wasn't man enough to accept the consequences for his actions. Just let it go. Do your time and move on with your life. It's going to be challenging to get off probation, so let bygones be bygones. You don't need to be looking for any more trouble. That's just gonna end up bringing you right back here.

Accidents

Hearing my brother getting into a car crash.

Breaking up with my girlfriend was an accident.

Beating someone ass because he was talking hella shhh and disrespectful to me, and getting locked up for not being guilty. Hurting my parents by not listening to their rules.

My friend getting into a car accident and passing away because the driver was drunk.

Tripping and falling down the stairways.

Getting into a car accident with my stepsister.

Pissing in my pants when I was little, like four or five.

Play fighting and got into a serious fight.

Stepping on a random person shoe by accident.

Helping my friend, then getting hit by them by accident.

Getting bad grades right now and messing up.

Going too far and almost attempted murder.

-Andy, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've listed enough here to be described as "accident prone." But at the same time, some of what you describe as "accidents" aren't accidents at all. Getting bad grades is an example of something predictable if you don't go to school or study, not an accident. Going "too far" and almost attempting murder requires a decision that you made to begin with, not an accident. We are really sorry about your friend dying from an "accident" caused by a drunk driver, and we hope that experience keeps you from drinking and driving, because if you hurt or kill someone while drunk at the wheel, no court will consider that an accident, either.

What Gives Me Hope

What gives me hope is my father. He died in October '07, and while I'm locked up, he keeps me and my mind right while I'm in this place.

I think about him all the time, and I talk to him. He tells me, "Just sit tight 'cause I see things you don't see, and this place is so much better than what I see for you, and a lot safer."

So yeah, my dad gives me hope.

-Bigg E, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sure that your father is looking down and guiding you to a better place. It's good that you are both talking to him and listening to what he has to say to you. He is giving you excellent advice!

What Once Outraged Me

When I feel outraged, the most is when I think about my ex-boyfriend, because knowing he's with some other female really makes me angry.

I had tried by best to hang on to him, but I guess it wasn't good enough.

The reason I get so angry is because he said he loves me when the truth is, he don't.

I'm angry because he left me for another female that I really don't like. I had some problems with her at the beginning, then it turned into a war. Many fists were thrown and many tears were shed, but I don't regret any of them. As I hit her, I felt her pain, but I did not care, because I feel she was my enemy and my worst nightmare. Every time I hit her, the thought of what she had put me through had just got stronger.

The man she stole had soon to be gone and the pain and suffering I had been through could soon be relieved. To me, that female doesn't exist. To me, she's just a bad nightmare, soon to be gone. She was no longer just a person, she was the person I hated most in my life.

I no longer feel hate, love or pain. My emotions had left just like he did. So to me when someone mentions their names, I don't know them. To me they were really never there. They were ghosts that I really only see when I'm angry.

-Amanda, Marin

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing that two people who were so crucial to your life, are now gone, after so much pain and drama for you? You must feel totally depleted. Did you also consider your now ex-boyfriend's roll in putting you through all the mess? What have you learned now about his character you didn't know when you first fell in love with him? What has this taught you about dealing with young men you may love some day?

For My Dawg

Just the other day

I talked to my dawg

He said he's okay

Just watching time pass slow each and every day

Told me to keep him in my heart and pray

Tell me why I feel this pain

All my homies goin' away

Thinking my life is going insane.

I've seen your son, I've seen his smile

He looks exactly like you, dawg

Breaks my heart down to tears

Knowing that you gone for years

I'm gon be right here by your side

Promise to keep your name alive

You my brotha, Vietnamese pride, and that's for life

You told me keep my life straight,

Don't end up in this place.

Be a dad to your son, and everything gonna be okay

I noticed that you changed

but I guess that's a better way

You told me you read the Bible and you let god handle

your fate At night I lay in bed thinking about the words
you say

How much it affects me, dawg, going day to day

I'm gon do what I can for you

Promise to give it my all forever true

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The love that binds friends is in a class by itself, and you have expressed that love as well as any we've read. All we can say, VT, is that in order to take care of anyone else, you first have to take care of yourself.

Outrage

The hate in me wants to kill
 Every time the rage come out real
 Madness wants to take over me
 Whenever the mind take control of me
 People think it's a game whenever I show the trigger
 But remember one thing, I was born a killer
 The only reason why I never unleash my fury
 "Cause the vision I'm seeking makes it weary
 So pray to god that you're still alive
 "Cause he's the one taking your side
 Realize now that you're not meant for the game
 Sooner or later, someone will take all the fame
 Now I'm on my knees saying god help me please
 My outrage is now taking over me

-Lynoodie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If the God you believe in created us all in HIS image, then how could you be "born a killer"? Isn't that just a self-centered way of saying you're more important than God? If you think God is taking your side, then why are you not taking His side? No one is "meant" for the game, because the game is not "meant" to be — not part of the Creation of God, but of the creation of the so-called children of God. Instead of trying to justify what cannot be justified (showing that trigger, for example), we'd be much more interested to read where your rage comes from. What is the source of your fury? Can it be tamed, or turned to making changes in yourself and in the world?

I Hope

I hope I can get over what happen in the past with me and my uncle.

I hope that I can do a program and stay at it and not listen to what people say.

I hope in five years I will be in college becoming the doctor I want to be.

I hope in the next three years I will be able stay out of jail so that I can go and see my uncle that's on my mom side in jail and take good care of him while he is in jail.

I hope that I will be able to see the looks on my family face when I come home to stay home for good – and stay out of jail for good.

-Jacqueline, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope all these things too – because you have it in you to be a great doctor. You know what it's like to feel sick on the inside and need healing, so you would have real compassion for your patients!

My Second Chance

When I moved to Richmond I start hanging around the wrong people that were selling drugs and playing with guns. I stopped going to school and started hanging in the streets. That's when I started coming to jail.

Then I started going to group homes. I remember one night clearly. I was standing on the corner across from Bingo's the liquor store. I was selling crack with my friend T. We were talking when a white van came and started shooting at me. The bullet hit me in the left leg, and I immediately hit the ground. I thought my life was over.

I remember waking up in the hospital... that's all I remember. After that I never went back to Richmond again and I never saw T. When I was in the hospital the doctor told my mom I was never going to walk again. But I started walking less than six months later. It took me a total of four months to learn to walk walk.

-Dominique, Alameda

From The Beat: Of course we had to call this "my second chance." You almost lost your life, you almost lost your legs, you put yourself in terrible danger, and yet you had the miracle of getting a second chance. Did this provide any kind of a wake up call for you? We hope so... don't waste this chance!

I'm Gonna Lay You Down (A Song)

When I first met you didn't play no games,
 When we was at the club you was the same,
 And when you got around them females you didn't change,
 But when my tongue touched yours you screamed my name,

Chorus

Boy I'm gonna lay you down boy
 I'm gonna lay you down, you bring me all this joy
 That's why you're my favorite boy
 'Cause I'm gonna lay you down boy
 I'm gonna lay you down

You kept it real with me,
 And that much I can see,
 You loved me for me,
 And that's why were getting married

Chorus x 2

Now we got a family and were good,
 Plus we even moved up out the hood,
 And our son is getting smarter everyday,
 And our daughter makes us smile when we're gray
 Oh I forgot to tell you, that your wifey has some damn good news,
 So listen to what I have to say,
 Shhhh we got another baby on the way,

Chorus x 2

Bridge I am the woman for you,
 and you kept it true, so you have my heart,
 'Till death do us part

Chorus repeat out

-Sydney, Alameda

From The Beat: Even without being able to hear you sing it, this song shows the talent of an emerging songwriter with real skills... You got it all – the verses, the chorus, the bridge. Nice!

My Life

Straight from the gutter where I was born and raised
 Only had one mother until she went to the grave

Now my life is like a lil' cloudy ass gray
 Prayin' to my mama to show me a better way
 But I finally realized I gotta change my ways
 But I just can't help it when I doing my thangs.

I'm thinking about the life I live,
 It ain't funny runnin' from the police and getting shot at
 Wondering will my family put up with my bad ass.
 I know I'm giving my family pain while I'm doing my thang.
 Hella shhhh done change when my mama passed away.

I know if she was here it would be better days,
 Thinking about my whole drama life.
 Shhhh it's getting me crazy, wishing I would never live the way I live
 Now that I'm here I got to deal with this shhhh
 I ain't got a father to show me how to be man.
 Ever since that shhhh done happen I got to do my best
 I can to stay out of trouble but it seems like I can't so
 I guess I gotta deal with it and keep my head up and be my own man

-Lil' Rondale, Alameda

From The Beat: The last line of this poem gets it exactly right. You've had a lot of grief and suffering, but now you have to be your own man – not the man the streets tell you to be, not the man the liquor tells you to be, not the man your anger tells you to be. What is it that you deep down want from life, and how do you plan to take those first painful steps to make it happen?

At The Same Time ...

I don't have dreams I'm no Martin Luther King
 I'm just on the block selling to these dope fiends.
 I don't have dreams but I do have hopes
 But at the same time ... on the block selling drugs man
 I don't got a future but I do got a conclusion
 but at the same time I'm the pollution.
 I'm the pollution in the water
 Next week my baby having a daughter but I'm a take care of her.
 But at the same time I ain't dreaming because I ain't caring
 But at the same time rest in peace to my ninjas in the hood.
 I'm a keep it real I'm still on the earth
 but at the same time I know what I deserve.
 I deserve respect but at the same time I got some regrets.
 But I wanted to get my turf tattooed on my chest
 But at the same time I don't wanna get no mess but when it
 comes to it I gotta spray the Tech. If you're tryin' to step on my
 toes you gonna have to gun
 But at the same time in the game time
 But at the same time I'm used to playing basketball, runnin' my
 draws if you leap like a frog I'm gonna have to drop you dog it's
 hard in the game ... if you walk to the store you can get chest
 blazed.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: It makes perfect sense that you keep saying "at the same time," because it's like you have two live a at the same time... the part that wants better for himself, and understands that this is no way to be, and then the part of you that is hell-bent on hurting himself. It must be stressful to try and handle these two sides of yourself "at the same time." Have you ever tried to go positive before? What happened?

Secrets

One Tuesday I told a secret.
 It was for nobody's ears,
 one that would provide the space to indulge.
 But my friend spilled the beans.
 My brain began to fog.
 My emotions were smashed,
 as if hit by an invisible train.
 My nervous system broke like glass.
 I wish it was a dream.
 How could I have made such a mistake?

-Reagan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You're in good company. Almost as much as we like to hear a secret, most of us want, at least secretly, to unburden ourselves of them. We like to tell them. Secrets seem to have a built in self-destructing mechanism. By the way good writing.

Was God Asleep

Was God sleeping when Dab fell out the window
 Was God asleep when Tamu overdosed
 Was God asleep when they tried to rob my cousin Robert
 When he was shot in the head by accident
 Was God asleep when Mike got killed
 Was God asleep when Rob the third died before his first
 birthday
 Was God asleep when they took my friend to jail
 They say he killed his baby
 Was God asleep when my dad's best friend shot him three times
 Was God asleep when Cornell and Lathan got hit by cars
 Was God asleep when they gave my cousin Phil fifty years
 Was God asleep when them dudes shot up my house
 Was God asleep when Hodari got killed
 Was God asleep when Key opened up the door
 Was God asleep when my cousin killed my other cousin over a
 dice game
 Was he asleep?

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: Things happen for a reason. But you the way you're writing this poem is like God is suppose to be reason why all these tragic events are happening. You can't always blame God, or somebody else for someone else's actions. We're all responsible for the actions we take. We all make our own decisions. And whether they end up being good or bad, or the consequences don't end up the way we want them to, it's a part of life. You can't expect to be making bad decisions all your life and get away with it. We mourn with you and we're sorry for all the people you have lost, whether it be to the streets, tragic events, or have lost their freedom for life. But life goes on and you can't keep dwelling on things. You have to learn to accept it. That's the way life goes. Be thankful that you're enjoying this breath of fresh air right now.

To Mom

Dear Mom, I love and miss you. I'm sorry for all the pain I've caused you. I know all you hear about me is negative and yet you never give up on me. You stand solid like a statue, always got my back threw think and thin good or bad.

But when you told me you had cancer it broke my heart. I felt like I could no longer hold my head up high. Without you I'm heartless. You complete my soul.

I know people think I'm a worthless gangster, but my goal in life is to make you happy. Mom I pray every night that you get better.

Love you mom, love your son Ronnie.

-Lil' Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: There are so many people who know that you are much more than a "worthless gangster" - including anyone who reads this piece. You must be strong now, even with all the fear for your mother's health. Her love is inside you, she's been giving it to you since you were born, let that love keep you strong... and we'll be praying for her too. Peace.

Happy Moment

Missin' my daughter when I'm up in here
 Even though she's away I still care
 I called my cousins in Stockton on Saturday,
 And he told me how he wish I was there,
 He told me he seen my daughter and she's grown up
 And startin' to get longer hair
 And she's walkin' now and what he said had me put on a smile
 I know it's been a while since I seen her but she can walk
 I think back to myself how I'm just a screw up.
 He said she got a pretty smile ...damn I wish I can see it.
 I just want to make up all the thing's that's gone I wish
 that I never went Wrong. I just hope when I'm free baby
 mama would let me see her.. I'm gonna do My best to be
 next to her. I ain't got much to say but I will always love
 her. I love you lil' princess, and damn I can't believe I'm
 not there to your father.

-Lil' Rondale, Alameda

From The Beat: It's not too late to find a way to be with her. Like you said, she's your lil' princess and you're her King. She needs you, you need her. First thing you need to do is have your PO put you in touch with a local community group that can inform you of your rights. You probably can't have custody, but we bet you can get visitation. Next, and most important, you need to look inside your soul and ask if you have the strength to cut EVERYTHING that might lead to violence or jailtime or separation from her. That means missions, drinking, vengeance, all of it. Can you do that? And if you can't do it on your own, can you reach out to a program that will help you. Reread this beautiful and heartbroken poem. Do you even have a choice?

Permanent Damage

What outrages me how the government allows drugs to enter the United States, which travels to cities with poor neighborhoods.

Also, how the government allows movie actors to run for governor positions and depict positive changes supposedly, but punish anti-gang activists to death. I mean who better to obtain change than a person who lived both sides, positive and negative?

This same governor permits large sums of money to build jails across the country, rather put up more schools or use those same budgets to lower the increasing poverty nation-wide.

Instead of helping overcome these situations, all I witness is unneeded permanent damage.

-Dante, Alameda

From The Beat: Like you say, it takes someone who has seen both sides of how things work to make that serious change. Are you ready to step up and be that someone soon? Reread what you just wrote - you have a lot to offer the world. And maybe the world also has a lot to offer you.

Lots Of Accidents

Accidents, I've had a lot of them, from when I was little to when I'm sixteen now. And also with my family and my little brother, that is now two going on three, feel me.

I remember when I use to learn how to ride a bike and I couldn't do it without training wheels. My grandpa had to help me but now I can do it all by myself. It just takes practice, that is the key to everything in life, but lets get to my brother.

Now I can remember it like it was yesterday, he was born. Then I was there when he started to crawl and then he worked his way to walking. He use to fall and cry all the time, bump his head and all types of shhh and that is my story.

-Derik

From The Beat: You're right. The key to everything in life is it takes practice, dedication and determination. If you mess up, just try again. If you can't get something right, keep practicing until you get it right. Just like your little brother!

My Love

My Livermore love Anna
You have a sexy smile
The things you do make me go wild.
I love your kiss
And your beautiful lips
Baby you're so fine
And your all mine
You're the only girl who I've been with who I respect.

-Lil' Knuckle

From The Beat: Congratulations! We're happy for you and your girl. Being in love is a wonderful thing. You shouldn't be wasting your time coming to the halls with a bunch of dudes. You should be on the outs in school, with your family and chilling with your girl!

Little Accident

I got into an accident before I came to this Juvenile Justice Center. I was on a dirt bike and a car hit me but it was not a bad hit though. I was able to jump up and drive off on my dirt bike. Then I saw the police behind me so I just kicked it in third gear and got out of there.

-Lb

From The Beat: You have to be a more careful, especially when you're on a bike. Bikes don't have no seat belts so if you get into any kind of accident you're gonna be flying like superman!

Big Accidents To Small

All around us accidents happen. When you run into someone and you make them fall, that's an accident. Maybe a child spills his juice on the floor that's an accident. Accidents are things that happen when you didn't mean them to happen.

You see people in car accidents and some could be tiny like a fender bender or some could be big like a car flipping over.

There are tons of things that could be accidents.

I remember when I saw an accident with some cars that were flipped over and the cars were really dented. I even saw ambulance taking away a few people. Accidents happen from small to big.

-Roman

From The Beat: You're right there are all kinds of accidents. There are big ones, small ones, medium ones, critical ones, and some of them involve a lot of people and some of them involve a single person. Mistakes go hand in hand with accidents because for an accident to happen obviously somebody made a mistake. For example car accidents, somebody had to have had made a mistake like running a red light, a stop sign or simply not paying attention.

Being Free And Out

Being free means a lot when you locked down in your cell in jail. When I was on the outside it was a whole lot better then being in here, because I didn't have to take orders from all these staffs that keep coming in here almost every 2-3 hours to tell me an others when we can eat, take showers, go to the rooms and go to bed.

Inside here it's like a different world when it comes to you not obeying what they say. If you look out of your room window after the staff done all ready told you not to, before you went in, you could get in trouble and end up staying in that room all day.

-Joeven

From The Beat: Like you said yourself, if you was free you wouldn't have to take orders from all these staff. So keep that in mind next time you're even thinking about doing anything that might get you into any trouble. Is it really worth risking your freedom? The final decision is on you!

Fast Life Money Hype"

Fast life money hype pop all day pop all night

We buy scraper to put them on 24's

We rob houses to get dough

We ruthless we don't care

But look at us now we either dead or in here

Sometimes I think I have no value of life

But I got a bright future

Instead I post on the block selling rocks

And do what I want to

I'm a violent lil' youngsta

I'm only fifteen and ninjas want my head

They want me dead

Momma pray for me 'cause I'm gone pray for you

My brother in max and she don't know what to do

But I'm gone keep my head up

And when I get out I'm gone keep my bread up

And go back to school and listen to my moms 'cause

she the only person I got

And watch my surroundings 'cause I'm not trying to get shot.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: You just said in your other piece in this issue, how you hate being locked up and how much you miss your mom, but then you go around talking about popping pills and living the fast life. You're sounding like a serious hypocrite right now. You don't wanna get shot, but you wanna be out selling rocks. Is it that hard to make up your mind and do right? Leave your mama out of this. Because no matter how much your mom misses you, you don't miss her at all especially if you return to the grind.

What Outrages You

One of the things that gives me anger is, two years ago my brother died. He was not really my brother, he is my God brother. His name was Mikal and I met him when I was five years old. Me and him was the same age when he died. No lie, he was my best friend, he was the only one I could talk to about anything and everything.

Another thing that makes me mad is someone yells at me or in my face. When someone yells in my face or at me then my temper will start to boil and when it boil you better get back. But now I can somewhat control my anger by reading, writing or talking to my brother, but he's dead now. Rest In Peace.

-Tommy

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your brother passing away. You can always write down your feelings to The Beat, especially if it makes you feel better. You're a lucky dude to control your anger by reading and writing 'cause most people your age can't do that. Do you have any advice for your peers on how to control your anger?

An Accident

An accident for me is when I got locked up. I don't know why, but the police decided that I matched the description. I was in all black clothing but I had on a dark blue peacoat and black jeans.

When the police tried to stop me I ran, because I wasn't suppose to be in that county as part as my probation. So I ran jumped over a fence and unfortunately the fence broke, but I kept going. I jumped over a few more gates.

I got about 5 or 6 blocks down when they finally caught me. They took me to the juvenile hall and I was there for a few weeks.

I took my case to trial and I beat my case, but I was also being charged with resisting arrest and vandalism.

A few weeks after that I was transferred to Alameda County, I was convicted of several other charges. Now I'm here waiting to get sent to camp.

-Jubbor

From The Beat: Now you must face the consequences of your actions. Don't run from Camp, do your program, it's easy now, so you can get out and not have to worry about the police stopping you anymore. Aren't you tired of being stuck in the system?

Hall Life

Just sittin here, chillin. I am hella mad because the judge actin' up and ain't tryin' to give me no chances. I been to court like five times and he keep detaining me.

This shh ain't coo', the food is nasty, the shower too hot, some of the staff is coo' but other staff is just plain scandalous, and they really don't care about you they are just trying to get paid.

There really ain't no privacy in here when you get out the shower it's a big ass window, there ain't no privacy in this shhh, I hate it in here. One more thing there is some fools in here, they some suckas, they talk shhh behind their doors, but when you run up they ain't sayin' shhh, I can't wait to get out.

-Limit

From The Beat: How can you say the judge is actin' up, when it is you that's actin' up? Why do you suppose the judge is not giving you another chance? What are you going to do when you get out, given how much you dislike the hall, what will you do so you do not return?

Not In My Plans

An accident that happened to me was getting locked up because this is a place I did not plan on coming to, at all. It was an accident hurting my mom's feelings because she hates seeing me in this place.

-Teddy

From The Beat: We don't think that most of you actually plan on coming here. Sometimes you don't realize that you're doing something bad until you get in trouble for doing it. Learn from these mistakes. You'll have your chance, but when you get the chance don't waste it.

RIP Bin And Carl

I'm missin' y'all out here man, since y'all got killed my life has become wreck. It was like yesterday when we together chillin'. I miss you y'all, you and Carl. Two real goons gone. Come back to me man. But I know God got y'all in a better place and y'all watching over me. Boy I think about y'all everyday. I hope y'all shining in paradise with God, man I love y'all. I wanna say rest in peace Bin and Carl, come back to us.

-Young Sani

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friends? Why did they pass away? How can you keep their memory alive? We hear you say two goons gone, what do you mean by goon? How long do goons usually live?

Outraged!

What outrages me is being in here and being behind these walls

just having to be locked up in a cell.

My mom is missing me and I'm missing her too. I pray for her. She prays for me and hopefully when I go back to court they let me go home so I can go to school and stay out of jail.

I'm tired of putting my mom through all this.

I'm going to be more careful who to hang out with 'cause you can't trust

I'm just gone keep it solid and get off probation and be a kid.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: You should be outraged with yourself for doing whatever you did to bring you behind these walls. Part of being a kid is making mistakes, but also part of growing up is learning from your mistakes also. We're glad to hear you say that you're gonna go back to school. Education is important. You not only have to watch who you hang with but you also gotta be smart about what you're doing when you hang out. Take the rage and turn it into motivation to succeed.

Fakes! Fake What? Fake Who?

Fake ninjas outrage me! A fake ninja to me is a ninja that don't have no reason to be in the street but he there anyway. The type of ninja who around to try and make a name for himself.

A real ninja can tell a fake ninja right off the back. Fake ninjas go around talking about what they did and who they did it to. A real ninja aint gotta boast about what he did. If it's worth knowing about, the streets already know.

Fake ninjas get into it with people and go around talking shhh like I am going pop that ninja.

If you get into it with a real ninja you ain't gonna know shhh until you on the ground with that lead burn on yo' ass. A real ninja ain't going say shh he going let his actions speak louder then any words.

-Greg

From The Beat: You know what, everybody runs their mouth about something. Just like you right now. You mouthing off about what's fake and what's real. So would you consider yourself a fake or a real? Maybe you should stop tripping off all these supposedly fakes and worry about yourself. 'Cause all these fakes ain't gonna do nothing for you but get you into trouble if you take the time of day to start tripping off them.

Outrageous Place

What's up Beat? This is Lil' J.

Something that outrages me is being locked up in this place when I could have been out with my family or friends. Being locked up makes a brotha want to go crazy 'cause they can't have as much freedom as they usually do.

Kids end up in a place like this for being outraged. Then when they get out they don't think twice.

I know y'all tired of being in this outrageous place 'cause I am.

Crime doesn't pay 'cause when you get caught and locked up you get outraged. Y'all think it's unfair y'all got locked up. But it is fair 'cause you did something you wasn't supposed to do.

When I get out I'm gonna think before I act 'cause I ain't trying to be in another outrageous place.

-Lil J

From The Beat: Something that outrages us is all you people talking about how outraged you are being locked up behind these bars! Then why do the crime if you can't do the time! Was it worth it? At least you have realized that. We hope that next time you get out there enjoying your freedom you think about how bad it feels to be locked up before you do something to get you into trouble.

Getting Me Mad!

What gets me angry is when people just start saying things behind my back. When people mess with me, like when they said you said something when you didn't say nothing. When people force you to do something that you don't want to. What I hate the most is when I don't get respect when I give them respect.

-Bryan

From The Beat: That would get us kind of mad too, if we give people respect and they don't give us respect. But you can only do your part. Not everybody is as polite and humble as you.

Accidents

Accidents happen all the time. An accident is when you didn't mean to do something but you did it that's an accident.

I remember when I was playing for a football team and I ran a play but I ran to the wrong side of the field trying to run to the touchdown. That's one of my accidents.

-Farley

From The Beat: You're right accidents do happen all the time. Sometimes making a mistake might cause for an accident to happen. That's part of life though, you live and you learn.

When I Was Little

One time I was eight I got hit by a car.

It all started when I got in trouble at school and the teacher called my house. I was riding home on my bike hella mad and I wasn't paying attention. I rode through a crosswalk and out of nowhere a car came and hit me. I fell off my bike and hit my head hella hard on the street.

It was a good thing my auntie made me wear my helmet 'cause my helmet cracked in two and that could have been my head. The ambulance came and took me away.

I kept saying, "let me go!" I stayed in the hospital for a couple of hours and left. I was kind of glad it happened 'cause I wasn't in trouble no more. After that, I started getting bad headaches and I went back to the hospital. The doctor gave me some pills to take at home and they went away in a month or two.

-No mo' headache

From The Beat: You're lucky that nothing seriously happened to you. Good thing you were wearing that helmet too, wow, you got your money's worth on that helmet. Why did you leave your school that day? Did the teacher send you home? Why didn't your family pick you up if you were in trouble?

Accidents

Accidents happen, like in my case it's high speeding from the boys (police). I didn't want to, but the car was stolen and the person I was riding with had a warrant. So did I. So it was fo' sure wasn't gone be no stopping.

All that happened all in one ride to and from the store. Only to get some snacks. If only my bro didn't have the munchies.

We high speeded from Hayward to Union (City) on an empty tank. We was leaving they shhh, but to run out of gas. That wasn't the end until we ran into a local Walmart and they setup a perimeter and we was done.

That's all I got for today. Aight then Beat.

-Seany

From The Beat: Why were you riding in a stolen car in the first place? Why did you have a warrant? Why do you feel like you need to steal cars? Why can't you get a job and save money so you can buy your own car? That way you won't have to be worrying about running from the police.

Mad, 'Cause My Friend Gone!

My name is Luis and I had a friend in a car accident on Macarthur in Oakland. He was like my brother, but he was like more than a friend to me.

When he was released from San Quentin, we had planned a fishing trip to Lake Berreysa. When he had got out I went to go talk to him I had went to the store with him and next day in the morning I had found out he had a car accident on Macarthur. I felt like socking everyone that was in my way. I socked my wall and I felt bad for my friend 'cause I just talked to him. I went to the funeral and I felt sad.

-Raptor

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friend. We know that you're feeling angry because you never got to say goodbye and you've written about this before. You can't go around socking everything and everybody. This is good that you write about this. You are more than welcome to always write down whatever you need to get off your chest for The Beat. It will help you feel better.

No Place Like Home

When I get out of here I will change my life from my bad life to a good life.

I will go to The Beat Within and get a job and help my mom with the house and help with the food in the house. But I will be going to school so I can get an education and go to college and make my mom happy.

I will never be coming back here and clear my record.

I will get my mind straight 'cause this is not where I want to be. This is nowhere a kid wants to be.

-Lil' Day

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you talk like that. You're more than welcome to come through The Beat Within and get a job. You sound very dedicated to trying to do the right thing. Stay focus and positive and positive things will come to you. It isn't easy but stay motivated and your hard work will pay off.

Helping Out

What gives me hope is when I know what's going on. Also when I'm doing good stuff, or when I complete a job and when I help others.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You have grown to be a very positive person. We're glad to hear you say you like to help others. There needs to be more people like you. How can you influence the people around you so they can help out others too?

Outraged By the System!

What outrages me is staff, not all but some. Why? Because they think that they are the shhh, but they are nothing compare to me. But they're nothing like that on the streets.

I hate when they lock us up for nothing. That shhh make me mad. Then I be hearing of hella dough, and that shhh makes me even madder. Then I can't do shhh about it but go to my room. When I go to sleep I forget about everything, but I know for sure if staff saw me on the outs they would say nothing. They would run for they life because they would be scared, and that makes me outrage.

-Lil' Oba

From The Beat: First of all, staff has a job to do, and you too have a job, to obey their rules. Why are you getting heated for nothing? If staff are acting like they're disrespectful, then let them be, or take matters into your own hands and write up a grievance. You're not gonna win. What goes around comes around. You don't have to go around trying to put anybody in their place. Just worry about yourself and trying to stay out of jail. Next time they make you mad go do some push ups, or something. Don't let them stress you out.

Fake Individuals Outrage Me!

What outrages me is when a fake person talks and acts like they do something that they really don't live. People play around, run they mouth, make it sound good to other people and some people believe them, but I can see a fake person. When it comes down to knowing the real, from the fake, that's the thing that outrage me. Fake people.

-Komell

From The Beat: Why are you tripping off fake people so much?! You like you're stressing off these individuals. Why don't you just ignore them and let them be. Anything you say or do ain't gone change the kind of person they are. So just worry about yourself and quit worrying about what kind of person the next man is. Worry about you. As long as you doing what you suppose to then you're gonna be good.

Making Me Mad

What outrages me is being here in juvenile hall. I hate coming to the hall every time for little violations.

It makes me mad when my PO comes and arrests me in my own house.

I have a couple days left in the hall and I'm gonna be good 'till then.

Jail is not a fun place to be, but for the three weeks I been here I have gotten use to it.

I am ready to go home to my family I miss them and they miss me.

Every time I come to the hall it's hard for me because my PO comes out of nowhere and puts me in handcuffs.

This is my last time in juvenile hall forever. I make this my final time.

-Kash

From The Beat: If we were you, we would do everything possible so your PO doesn't have a reason to lock you up again. Go to school and follow all the guidelines of your probation so your PO doesn't have a reason to lock you up. Good luck!

Hope

I'm thinking about hope right about now. Hoping that I get out this Thursday on my court day.

What's gives me hope is that I've been doing what I have been told. I have not got into any problems that I have brought on myself and wrong doing. I have thought it through, that I have to make a change in my life and follow my goals. Being in my cell made me have a clear thought of mind. And I need to be on the right track.

One of my goals is to finish my last two years in high school and start looking for a job that can help me in life.

-Joseph

From The Beat: If you're really dedicated and strive for your goals, the distance between you and your goals will become shorter and shorter with each step you make towards it. You will soon be released and face the temptation of the streets again. Don't let it distract you from accomplishing your goals.

Outraged By This Facility

What outrages me is being locked up in this facility. Having to wake up when staff says so, eat when they feel like feeding me, bathe around other males my age, being told what to do and when to do it. It makes me want to hurt someone, sometimes.

When I get released I refuse to come back here I would rather be dead.

-Greg

From The Beat: If you hate this facility so much, then why do you do things that will bring you here? What's the plan to never come back? What kind of goals do you have? We hope you stop getting in trouble and get your shhh straight so you won't ever have to be locked up again.

Forget 'Em

What's up Beat this you boy Nacho, people always think they hard, but when you tell them to see you then they say they don't want to see you because they want to get out. To me they some marks because I will not back down fo' anything. They talk hella shh but wont do shh.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: Maybe cause they realize that they don't wanna waste their time fighting and catching more time. Everybody says things they don't mean. Like some of you be saying "I'm Never Coming Back!" But then they end up coming back!

Hard To Make Me Mad

It's hard for me to get mad. When I get mad it's a different story. It's a different story because I'll get so mad that I'll do something crazy, but good thing that it's so hard to make me mad.

People be trying to get me mad but it don't work because its hard and people really don't know how to make me mad. That's the good thing.

There are only three things that I hate about people. One of the things is I hate about people is when they be sad. The second thing is when people be talking shhh about the' self. The last thing is when they be getting mad.

-Frost

From The Beat: Your nickname should have been jolly, 'cause you saying that you never get mad. How do you do that? There has to be people that get on your nerves or things that get you mad, how do you control your anger?

What Give Me Hope

I get hope when my family comes to visit me and tells me to keep my head up. And when someone preaches to me, and when I read a bible. Not thinking about what I did in the past and how I'm going to do right when I get out of jail.

-James

From The Beat: That's tight that your family comes to see you and support you through hard times. You don't need to forget about the past, you just need to learn from it. Move on and try to focus on doing what's right so you can get out of the system and be successful.

Rumors

One thing that outrages me when someone say something behind my back and then I hear everybody talking about it but when I confront them they say I don't know what you're talking about.

-James

From The Beat: It is painful to find out that one of your so-called friends is talking bad about you behind your back. But there's always gonna be that he said she said b-s. Avoid these people and just go about your business. If they can't be real with you then ditch them.

Family Gives Me Hope

What gives me hope my mom, dad, sister, brother, grandma, grandpa, aunt, and uncle. All of them give me hope. When I'm feeling down they pick me right back up making me feel like somebody.

Even my girl gives me hope. She never want me down. she always get me back up so I guess I'm trying to say is my family is the people that give me hope.

-Patrick

From The Beat: That's great that you have your whole family and you have your girl friend's support. You should be really motivated 'cause a lot of people don't have that many people to support them. Don't waste your time in here when you can be out there spending time with your loved ones!

Stitches

When I think about accidents I think about when I sliced my finger when I was nine years old.

When I was nine I was playing with a pocketknife trying to cut a piece of wood off my dresser. When I was cutting it, my aunt came in the room and yelled, "what are you doing?"

I got scared and flinched. When I flinched I dropped the knife directly on my finger and it sliced it deep, I got rushed to the hospital then got stitched up.

-Amariae

From The Beat: Damn that must have hurt. Did you learn your lesson?

What's Up Beat

Well I'm gonna talk about accidents. The accident I remember I had was when I was with two of my cousins and two other friends. We were on our way to McDonalds. I was driving and then a car crashed into us but nothing really happened. The car got messed up but none of us got hurt. That's the worse accident I had in my life. Well Beat this vato is out alrato.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: Good thing you didn't get seriously hurt. You're kind of lucky that you had a lot of people were in your car and nobody got hurt. We know you have no license either. You would have got in deeper trouble too.

Fed Up

Man I'm so fed up with being in here, man it really sucks, I want to go home and be with my family. I regret doing whatever I did wrong. I don't want to do wrong no more, if this is the consequence.

I am fed up, I come here every couple of months. I can't seem to be able stop doing wrong, I want to right, but it seems I just cant.

-A Regulat

From The Beat: Well what's stopping you from doing right? What can you do to break out the bad habit of doing bad? We know you're tired of coming to jail. Where can you find the strength to resist all the temptations from the street?

My Feelings

Today I was in a good mood because tomorrow, on Wednesday, I go to court and I was excited because my dad said I was mostly likely going home. But my attorney told me that my PO didn't do an updated report. She's giving the judge the same report that she had in October so my attorney said he's going try to fight for me, but I might have to stay some extra days. That's why I'm about hecka mad....

-Raven

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that...maybe you can take these extra days to focus on what you are going to do when you get out, to make things better for yourself and your future?

My Accidents

An accident is when I picked the wrong friends.

I was thinking the wrong things at the time.

That was an accident.

Now I know what to do so I won't make no more accidents.

The real accident was when I came back to jail for a stupid reason.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Accidents happen what can we say. But you made a mistake by making poor choices. It's okay, just learn from your mistakes and make sure you don't repeat them. Be smart!

Laughing At The Preachin'

What's up Beat? Still up in this juvenile justice system having the laugh of my life. This shhh is hilarious. You got temptation looking ninjas up in here and it's just funny to me 'cause after watching the temptation movie, I realized how funny this shhh is. Plus, this whack preacher lady, Lord forgive me, but I just couldn't take her preaching serious she almost had me crying with her long ass ridiculous prayers. Piece.

-Double L

From The Beat: What was so funny about the preacher lady preaching? Do you ever get people that try to preach to you? What would make her sermon better? How would you do it?

What Gives You Hope

What gives me hope is when I get around my squad and sometimes we just kick back and relax and talk about the things we did. Or we just smoke and drink and plot and plan on think to do to get money.

What gives me hope is when I'm with my girl. Sometimes we might watch one of my favorite movies like Boyz In The Hood Scarface and a whole lot of other movies but I aint going to get into all of that.

-Vell

From The Beat: Nothing like kicking back with your boys or your girl huh? Maybe you should all kick back and watch movies more often so you can stay outta jail?

In The Hall For Being Pregnant

The thing that really outrages me right now is that I'm in the hall for being pregnant. For a whole week I didn't go to school because this baby was causing so much pain and being sick I couldn't make it out the door.

I don't understand why my PO didn't understand. I know she's been pregnant before and I know everyone's bodies are different. I know there were times she was sick and missed a lot of work. I know she knows that I hate school but once I found out, I raised my grades so she would get outta my hair. Then she does this to me.

The hall is not for me not all and I'm never coming back because I'm a good 15year old girl. Wednesday is takin' too long...

-Reola

From The Beat: We are very sorry that you have to be locked up while you are pregnant, and are glad that you are getting out soon. When you are out, what steps can you take to make sure this doesn't happen again? Is there a teacher/doctor/nurse who can support you and advocate for you, to make sure you and your baby are getting all necessary help?

Crazy Love

I love you so much, but I really don't know why sometimes. You got me strung from day one, next thing you know I'm tryin' to get me some. I think about you so much it drives me crazy, I don't have anything else on my mind to think about. I think that my mistake was meeting you because it caused me pain.

My love for you is unconditional baby, you ain't got to ever worry 'cause I'm always going to be here for you under any circumstances or situation. You can count on me to love you.

-Stanley

From The Beat: Stanley, your piece raises a lot of questions for us and makes us worry about you. Question #1: while you sit here in jail, is this person really the only thing you have to think about? What about yourself, and your future? Your freedom? And question #2: do you really want to offer unconditional love to this person? If he/she's cruel to you, if he/she hurts you or your family, would you really love him/her this much, just the same?

Abuse of Power

Something that outrages me is when President Bush is running things the way he likes it, and doesn't listen to what the people in the United States want to happen.

Something else that outrages me is when the staff in here abuses their power and think they're God himself and get bold because they know that their word will always overrule ours, just because we are the ones in the Alameda County attire. Not all staff is like this. Most staff is cool and don't abuse their power because they realize that they're just like us, but they just didn't make any mistakes to get them into a situation like this.

We're all human, no one's better than anybody else except God himself.

-Anti-Bush

From The Beat: It shows real maturity that you can see the way abuse of power varies on a case by case basis. The best thing for you, of course, is to get out jail as soon as possible so you aren't at the mercy of another person, or the system.

Missing

I hate being in here. I wish I was with my family and with my girl. I am here for a stupid reason that has no meaning. I miss my mom's cooking and my house. I miss the freedom of being outside.

-Missing it all

From The Beat: We hope you get that freedom soon - and that you manage to stay close to your mom's cooking, where you belong!

Hope

Man when I'm down in out or feel like I'm losing hope I turn to my baby mama! I can go to her for anything don't matter what I'm going through.

Lately I haven't been losing any hope or stressing. But back when I first went to jail I was real depressed thinking about that I got a son on the way and I might miss him being born.

Now that I found out I'm getting out in March that gives me hope!

- Me Too

From The Beat: That's good that you have your baby mama to support you and help you get through your time in jail. We hope that you do get out when you say you might. When you get out handle your business and don't come back so you won't miss out on watching your son grow.

In Ten Years....

In ten years I see myself living with my girl in a nice neighborhood, in a two story house with three bedrooms, two and a half baths, a big back yard, three kids, and two dogs.

Hopefully I'll be a professional boxer, or a high school teacher. Either one is fine with me. I want to be able to do anything and give my family everything.

What would get in the way of my dreams? I think myself would get in the way of dreams. don't What would get in the way of my dreams? I think that I myself would. I don't live in a bad neighborhood anymore. I don't hang out with that many people that influence me to do negative things. I go to school every day, and mind my own business. It's just that stubbornness I guess. I just can't help it. But I'll overcome this and accomplish my goal straight up.

-Lazy the Kid

From The Beat: It's common for people to get in the way of their own dreams because of stubbornness or fear or a million other things. It seems like you have some very specific dreams and that you're driven to accomplish them. That's the most important thing in reaching your goals - being determined. Just hold on to that determination, that dream, and you won't get in your own way.

What Gives You Hope

What gives me hope

Thinking about Rita and dropping the soap

Never crossing that line or that rope

In bossy juvenile hall I have to cope

Walk around and mope

I feel like I need to smoke. Not no drug, just a pote

Writin' in The Beat to promote

Not selling no coke, some think I'm lyin' like it's a joke

But for real don't try to provoke in here females push buttons like a remote

-Jocelyn

From The Beat: Jocelyn, this is a great start to a poem, we wish you could have written more! Our curiosity is peaked now...but we still don't know exactly why Rita gives you hope...

Mistakes

Coming here was a mistake. I know I committed a crime and and I'm tryin' do this time but that's what happens when you do crimes. You can say, "I accidentally got caught." It was bound to happen after I saw the 5-0. People were snitchin' before we got caught. It was a mistake being with them. Man, it was a mistake, one I gotta deal with, as anybody could see. I'm tryin' to get a release so pray for me

-Coco Mami

From The Beat: It's hard to tell from your piece: do you think it was a mistake doing the crime in the first place? People often blame snitches, but there would be nothing to snitch about if you were obeying the law in the first place. We do pray you get released, but we hope you will think twice the next time.

Stay Strong

I been through some things hoping my ninjas stay the same but they always change.

I'm keeping it solid. I'm still holding it down. Man people tell me let go and I look them in the eyes and tell them straight up I'm with my crew until the end. But it ain't the same without Turk. I got to let you know, ain't too many real ninjas like you bra.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: There's got to be a way to "hold it down" without holding yourself down as well. You've already seen how much suffering this life causes - isn't it time to make a change, for yourself and for your loved ones?

Shhh Happens

People die every day

while moms and dads sit home and pray

shhh happens.

When your family plan and hope the best,

you on the block tighten up your vest

-- just in case shhh happens.

With your hammer cocked back and mind in a blur you don't think about the problems you gonna stir, shhh happens.

People judge you and think the worst, but the decisions you make you could end up in a hearse

'cause shhh happens.

My mom always tells me that I live life too fast, but I live each day like it's my last - shhh happens.

-Young Doughboy

From The Beat: The thing is that if you really take control of your life, you don't just let things happen to you, you make shhh happen. It's the only way... don't let your future happen to you. Make an active plan, what do you want? What can you do to keep your mind clear and not in a blur? Do you want to control your own life? Or let someone else control it?

Free Me Fast

Free me fast,
How long this about to last?
When I think about the past, it looks like pieces of
shattered glass
Looking to the future, wondering when this time will
pass

Man, I am sick of being here so free me fast!

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: What else are you thinking about in terms of your future? What's the plan for when you get out? You are intelligent and energetic—you could do so much! The question is what you want to build with that shattered glass all around you...

Hope

To be quite honest not a lot of things give me hope in here, but there are a couple of things that do.

One of them is when God Squad comes and enlightens us on the Bible, talks to us about Jesus and tells me things I really didn't know.

Also, when Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday mornings come it also gives me hope because I know I get to see my parents later on in the day.

-Empowered

From The Beat: Can you think of anything else that brings you optimism? It's important to hold on to those things that do give you hope. Keep them close to you because hope is what brings happiness, even if it's the smallest thing in your daily life to look forward to.

But I Really Hope...

I hope I will be a better person,
I hope my mother will stop crying.
I hope I will die old

I hope I will meet my dead cousin one day.
I hope for a lot of things but I really hope for me to get out of the system.

-Lil' Chuy

From The Beat: It's not about becoming a better person, but becoming the good person that you really are, deep down inside. How will you do that? And how will you get out of the system for real, by staying mentally free once you are released?

Love Will Come Your Way

To the people who didn't have someone to hold on to on the Love Day February fourteenth, I have something to say to yo' hearts. So I want all ears open, hearts open, and love in your life.

Smile for I am here to say love will come your way.

The Love you have in yo' heart, don't never let it go, because there's people around the world that thinks about you while you're gone. If you don't believe me, wait till you go home. Every time you give up you lose all yo' hope.

But I'm here 'till life goes on.

The love you have in yo' heart, don't let it go, because if you feel alone, don't 'cause it's all over the world. You should always remember that love is in your soul. So you don't need nobody. just to let it show.

So don't you ever forget to never let the love go, 'cause if you believe in love it's in yo' soul. And if you believe you're in love, your Valentine is at home.

So smile and never let the love in your heart go.

-Love itis

From The Beat: These are heartwarming and inspiring words, particularly for people who might be missing someone at home, and looking for that love. We hope others feel what you're saying, and mostly we hope you feel it too.

Hope

What gives you hope? My mom gives me hope because she is the only one in my life. She makes me feel good when I am in a bad spot.

There is one more person that give me hope is God because times like right now, I just read the bible to get this off of my mind.

I hope that when I go to court on the 21st of Feb and the 29th, I expect the best outcome. I hope the guy don't come to court. I just pray to God I miss my mom so much and all my brothers too. I can't stop thinking about them. They is on my mind all the time.

-Reem

From The Beat: You're a smart dude, you shouldn't be wasting your time in the halls. You have a family that cares about you and misses you a lot. Why are you on them streets getting in trouble? Think about it's not worth it. You could have been with your brothers and your mom right now. When you get out, think about your brothers and mother, before you decide to get in trouble.

A Video Game With Consequences

Man getting money is hella fun, but it's like a video game

It's a game you could quit but at the same time its consequences behind it. Man the game is outrageous 'cause hella ninjas getting' knocked down. But me thank God I made it to sixteen ...'cause my potna Davon did not even make it. But at the same time he was only able to make it to fourteen. That was my ninja, straight up, but he still here and my blood but I will still thug.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: You put it exactly right - it feels like a videogame, except for that horrible part about where the rush leads to irreversible pain and damage... like what happened to Davon. Yet you still say that you're not going to give up the game? What would you do if you could do something else?

Still Here

What's up Beat! Well this is Tweety. Yes, I'm still here. I'm hecka happy because I should be out tomorrow, you feel me? I can't wait I finally get to see my brother. I haven't seen anybody but its good 'cause it this ain't gonna happen again.

I've been in here for two months. I was in here for New Years, and I ain't trying to be in here anymore. There are too many females. I'm going crazy 'cause they be tryin' to do too much.

Well, anyway Beat, I got to go, my time is up.

-Lady Dimples

From the Beat: We want to believe that this isn't going to happen again, but what will you do on the outside to MAKE SURE you don't locked up again? What's the plan?

My Accident

What's good with The Beat and all y'all on lockdown? This is Tete comin' from this unit. Let me tell y'all about my accident. One day, I'm in my room lookin' for my lighter, and I couldn't find it. I was on probation so my mama didn't want me smoking. So when I walked in her room I saw ma mama sparking her cigarette with my lighter. And right off the back I say "that's my lighter!" and she just looked at me like I was crazy, so I say "I'm just playing."

-Tete

From The Beat: Is smoking something you miss while locked up? Do you think being in here without cigarettes will inspire you to quit once you get out?

Which Way Will I Go? Honestly I Don't Know

1. Crime

I pledge allegiance to crime family and all its rebellious intentions and beliefs

I will never choose a woman over any affiliates.

I will spend my time collecting money and saving the money I receive.

I will not cooperate with any representative of the US government trying to enforce there rules upon me.

I will not bow down to anyone or thing at tempting to control me.

I will seek knowledge.

I will not hesitate to open fire on a government representative to keep my freedom.

I will not rape any woman nor man.

I will not hesitate to kill.

I do understand this life I lead may have me imprisoned or murdered.

I do understand that this makes me a militant soldier with a cause to uplift or family and friends out of oppression from the government bad seeds that get paid from our suffering.

I pledge allegiance to the life of crime and not listening to the government.

The main thing of all is to get money and not spend but save it.

We will rise above poverty and go to war with law enforcement if it calls for it. Everything from bombs, cocktails, and guns everything including biological warfare.

2. Good

I pledge allegiance to a progressive future and one day to leave America.

I shall not participate in any violent acts but just to progress mentally, physically, and spiritually.

I will pursue all positive goals and help my African American race rise above oppression & poverty.

I will comply with reasonable law enforcement requests so I can contribute to a positive environment.

I will build a team of well-educated friends so we can start a revolution.

I will get money.

-Lil' Young

From The Beat: You put it perfectly here...and the future is yours. Will you throw your life and freedom away in a futile attempt to rebel against the police and the law, be a rebel? Or will you achieve greatness, change the system and lift both yourself and your people up in the tradition of the heroes and revolutionaries? The choice is before you...we hope you pick the one worthy of your heart and your passion.

Feeling Down

When I'm not feeling life, when I'm feeling mad, depressed etc... the thing I turn to is drank. Every time I'm feeling that way I just walk to the store and get me some drank, and I like being alone too. I turn to drank 'cause it just makes me forget about everything that I'm thinking of. Sometime it relaxes me, but most of the time it gets me angrier than what I was, and when I drank I be posting on my block, so most of the time I end up running into somebody I don't like. So I end up doing what I got to do.

So when I get out I'm gonna find something positive to turn to in times like that, and make a couple changes.

-Mousie

From The Beat: You said it yourself. We're glad you realized that drinking when your mad, angry, or depressed doesn't do anything. It might temporarily get rid of your problem but it ain't the solution to it. When you get sober your problems will still be there. We're proud to see that you have realized that turning to drank is only gonna bring you more problems.

Do You Feel Like Guns Make You Safer Or Less Safe?

In my part of Oakland, you really do need a gun, 'cause people be tryin' to come through "gassin."

But they already know we knocking shhh down, so they try to catch us slippin'. But I don't even be slippin'. That's why I'm up in here, 'cause I keep my thang on me any time of the day or night. So to answer your question, hell yeah, guns make me feel safe.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Let's put the question another way, if you weren't tryin' to "knock shhh down," if you were living a life that was not criminally minded, would you still need the guns? Because yeah you say you don't get caught slipping, but you've already buried enough loved ones to know that a gun can send a bullet, but a gun can't catch one. Wake up!

To My Father Who Was Never There

A survivor at Alameda County Juvenile Hall at night, I would sit in my room and wonder when you would come rescue me. When you would realize I wasn't there.

I just had my daughter on Dec. 29, 2007. She'll always have me. I'll give her the life I never had. Even when she said I'll be like her dad I don't want her to grow up like me going around screwing up and shhh. I also don't want her to make decisions I made.

Right now she's at her mom's house. But when I get out she'll have everything. I gave my credit card to my girl so she cold spoil my daughter. I get the receipt in the mail so I know what goes on. She can have anything she wants. I'll always be home when she needs me.

To my baby daughter I love you Tamika, born December 29 2007 at 4:29pm.

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: Congratulations! We hope that you enjoy every minute that you can with your daughter. You can't really spoil your daughter from jail because she needs your presence in her life. Your presence in her life is something you can't put a price on. It's priceless. She doesn't want all those materialistic gifts. She wants the gift of your love. So stop getting caught up so you can be there for her. By the way, make sure you can pay off that credit card. Don't be careless.

Beat Interview With Smokey

TBW: how much time you have left?

Smokey: 3 and a half months left.

TBW: Then what?

Smokey: Adult school for a GED, then a junior or community college to get certified as a mechanic.

TBW: Solid plans, where will you live?

Smokey: Redwood City.

TBW: With Your Family?

Smokey: My moms, step pops and four brothers.

TBW: What do they think of your plan?

Smokey: They're pretty happy and excited at the same time.

TBW: How old are your brothers?

Smokey: The ones I'll be living with are two years, twelve, thirteen and sixteen.

TBW: Any Final words?

Smokey: Yeah as a matter of fact I do: To all incarcerated, keep your head up, the game is short but life is long. Live it to the fullest...be aware of your surroundings, be all you can be. Know you're not alone. And to Mousie -- que tu mama se sienta bien. God will always be with her, and so will my prayers.

-Smokey

From The Beat: We feel like we know you better, and know more about what's at stake for you. You have a real future ahead of you, and people who love you and depend on you waiting for you to get that freedom and keep it. The challenge is not getting caught up in the varrio! Good luck!

So Saucy So Sweet

Look at me you see a little ninja that's kind and sweet.
 When females look at me they say that lil' ninja so
 saucy so sweet
 When ninjas look at me they be like that lil' ninja so
 saucy and totes his heat
 I'm on my new phase were ninjas don't phase me
 If you call and ask me were I'm at I'm at the tell with
 you' lady
 Ain't scared to make her my baby
 Now she on my team and --we getting paid.

- Mo Mo

From The Beat: If you ARE saucy, and if you ARE sweet, you would never even think to speak on putting a girl on your "team"... because you'd be full of the respect that a young woman deserves.

Confused

Loving you got me confused in all kinds of ways,
 Yes I'm happy when I'm around you
 And sad when I'm with out you
 But one thing that I'm confused on is do you feel the
 same way? I'm so confused,
 Do me saying I love you scare you?
 Does it affect the way you look at me,
 Yeah, so confused I am
 Yeah things would be different if I could read yo' mind ...
 huh.

-Lady Precious

From The Beat: Love is one of the most confusing things in the world. The good kind brings you up, the bad kind can bring you down, knowing the difference can take a lifetime to learn... so what do you think, is this a good love for you or a bad one?

Motivation

Most of the time when I feel depressed or hopeless either
 the church come Sunday and bring me some motivation
 or when my auntie come she always help me get by. When
 she came, she gave me hope. How she gives me hope,
 because of her words and the way she does things. Her
 character motivates me.

-Lacey

From The Beat: That's pretty cool that you have your auntie come see you and inspire you. She sounds like a great person by the way you talk about her. That's good that you get motivated by church too. Try to stay in high spirits even without the church on Sunday. Any day can be a Sunday. It's up to you to make it like that.

Aint No Secret

I've done a lot of bad things that I can't say was an
 accident
 Robbed a few people so my clothes can be immaculate
 Did shhh that you couldn't even imagine
 Posted on the block strapped with my pants saggin'
 I'm spittin' game and I ain't braggin'
 Seen situations turn tragic
 Potnas there and then they gone like magic
 Addicted to funk like a habit
 Money in my sight and I gets to grab it
 OG's told me since I was a youngsta to be a savage
 Stay focused on my grind because I'm about cabbage
 And ain't nobody gone stop me because I gotta live
 lavish

-Big Wayne

From The Beat: You can't go around robbing people for a living homie. That's a for sure shot to the pen, but then again if that's where you wanna go then do your thang. There's other ways to shine without having to rob people for the materialistic things they worked so hard for. You can get a job, or find legit ways to hustle. But taking other people's property ain't coo', man.

Can't Be Too Hopeful

What gives me hope... things that give me hope, is myself. When I feel things are getting bad, I try and push myself for better days.

Like right now I'm in a bad spot. So I do push ups, pray, & write or read to get the bad thoughts out of my mind. Because when I get out I'm going to have a lot of hope. But I already know I can't have too much hope, because if you get your hopes up the things your hoping for might go bad and you will get mad.

My hopes right now are to get out soon. Go to school & get ready for college. So I can get ready for the adult world.

-Domz

From The Beat: All you can do is hope. But you can't give your hopes up. Especially off shh you can't control, but the things that you can control you have to stay focused. You wanna get ready for the adult world you gotta be motivated and determined to succeed. You wanna go to college then do it. Don't let anything stand in your way.

My Role Model

My role model is my uncle Trell, because he is a solid ninja and he depends on no one. And he's always there for me through thick and thin even though I stole from him and he forgave me. That made me respect him even more. And if I was to lose him I would have to gas somebody to revenge his death and this is why he's my role model.

-Lil' D-Nice

From The Beat: Damn your uncle is a special dude to forgive you after you stole from him. We're glad you have role model in your life. Does he give you advice? Does he try to tell you to stay out of trouble?

Unbought, Unbossed

You say no, I say yes,
 don't tell me what to do.
 Don't tell me how to act.
 Don't tell me to wear my left shoe on my right foot.
 If I do I'm being me.
 Don't have no deal for some feels.
 Say you care. What's real.
 I'm not a fancy car to ride around and show off...
 Nope you can't buy me
 Tell me what to do. Nope you can't boss me.

-Shany Boe

From The Beat: This reads like a personal Declaration of Independence, shouted out with real pride and confidence. Stick to your words and the voice inside you that knows who you are, and that voice will steer you straight!

What Gives Me Hope

The Lord gives me hope because He gave me everything I asked for in His name. Let me tell you how. When I was on the outs I had no job or nothing, and I asked the Lord to help me in my life, to give me strength, good since, wisdom, etc. and He did and He helped me. When I put my life in His hands first I'm in here and I got all the things I asked for by reading the bible.

Next I'm going to ROP and I'm going to get my GED and play pro Basketball. And when I get out I got a job waiting for me and then I'm going to get an apartment and line my life. Thank God.

-Lil' Militant

From The Beat: We're glad that the Lord has inspired and motivated you to do the right thing. We hope that you don't lose focus and stay on the right path. Don't ever forget about your time here. We hope you learned your lesson and this time that you spent here helped you realize that freedom is not to be taken for granted.

You Ever Feel All Alone?

For a short period of time you never had a home?
You ever lost a close homie?
You ever realized that something wasn't worth it?
Well if you haven't, I have.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: This could be the beginning of one of your most powerful poems yet... we're ready for it!

What Gives You Hope

Being locked up in here, God is my only hope and I trust him with all my heart because I have that type of relationship with Him and when I ask Him anything it's always answered.

When I'm on the outs and I'm feeling down or I'm confused, I just turn to my box of Newports and a bottle of Privilege and come to the understanding that everything is going to be alright, you dig?

-Taco

From The Beat: Thanks for being honest with us. So we have to ask-which do you find more helpful in times of need—looking to God, or getting drunk? And what would it take to help keep you sober and spiritually connected when you are on the outside?

Accidental Lock Up

I have had an accident when I got locked up. I should have just went into the back yard and hit the fence, went through the apartments and got ghost and finished getting hella drunk.

-Ramos

From The Beat: What you should have done is not of gotten in trouble in the first place. Then you wouldn't be here writing about I could've should've, would've.

Is There A Lady

Is there a lady in the world that is just right for me
If there is I'm looking for her where could she be
I need a young lady not a little girl
I'm a king as you already know
So many writings I could make it snow with paper
I need a lady in my life this subject is major
I need one that is light bright
Not too white
Just my type
That's the kind I like.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: There's a lady for you out there you must search hard and be careful who you choose. But first you can't be looking for a lady while you locked up. You need to stay out of trouble. And once you find her you must stay out of trouble so you won't lose her.

What Outrages Me

What outrages me is all the killing going on in Oakland. It outrages me because I don't want to hear one of my family members getting killed.

What can make it better is if all the weapons gets put down and all the hatred disappears. I think it's too intense for people to stop. Sometimes it threatens because I had guns pull out on me a couple of times. It makes me outrage thinking about it.

-Kevin

From The Beat: A lot of people are outraged by all the senseless killings. Why are there so much senseless killings going on? There are a lot of people outraged by this but what can you do about it? How can you gather all the members in your community together and stop the violence? There are too many guns out on the streets. Stay out the streets because they're not safe.

Shark Accident

I remember an accident when I was a young teen. I was fishing in a river over in some construction spot with a lake when we caught a fish. Well that's what I thought it was, but it was a tiger shark. It looked up at me then dived back into the water and tried to come back and snatch my pit bull off the rock. My dog ran. That was a traumatizing accident. After that accident I haven't went fishing no more in any area that wasn't high over ground that shhh won't happen again. Imagine if I was off that syrup!

-Scared Shhhless

From The Beat: Damn the tiger shark almost ate your dog?! That's crazy! Damn, we're glad nothing happened to your dog. At least you learned your lesson without having your dog get eaten.

My Family Gives Me Hope

I would say family because they have always looked out for me. Somehow I feel like I gotta show 'em I could do good for myself.

My lil baby girl gives me the hope I need to get by. I wouldn't care if she wasn't there!

My mom's is solid. She's been there for me through the thick and thin. So my hope comes from my family and I hope for the best.

-Mousie

From The Beat: We hope the best for you. We can only hope that you mature and make better decisions for yourself. You can be motivated by your little girl, or your parents, but you gotta feel it in your heart to want to succeed for yourself. Good luck!

Almost Out!

What's good Beat this your boy Turk. I'm out for real in like two weeks. So to all real ninjas that do real thangs on the outs, stay strong. Bad times don't last forever but real ninjas do.

-Turk

From The Beat: We hope that you're doing things safe out there, 'cause the streets are taking lives for no particular reason. Stay out of trouble. We don't wanna see you back on more serious charges.

We're Fitted

What's good Beat? First, I met this broad at a house, then at a block party, she had on a fit designed by Ed Hardey and I had on this fit designed by LRG. I also had on some kicks designed by 23. Lil' mama told me every time she see me I'm fitted. I said you too. I had to admit it.

-Jamarco

From The Beat: That's cool that you met some girl that likes to be fitted just like you. You had to admit that she was looking fly. But you probably aint looking to fly in them county clothes right now. But if you stay outta trouble you could be fitted all day checking out all the fitted girls.

My Accident

Well for me an accident is when I fell down and couldn't get up from the falling. And I was hurt to try to stand to go on and be myself. To do good again by going to school and getting a job so I can stay out of trouble.

How things hurt me is when people make me disappointed at them to the point it makes me want to do something.

-Accidente

From The Beat: Anything is possible if you really put your mind to it. We know you don't like being locked up wearing the next man's draws. Do what ever you feel you need to do to stay out of trouble. Go to school and get an education. Get a job so you can earn some legit money. All your hard work will eventually pay off.

What Enrages Me/Stress

The most thing that enrages me the most is being lied to so much for the most simplest shhh, like sayin' they want to do something but never comin' through, givin' a bunch of excuses but being in here gives me too much time to think about all the stuff going on, and it's very stressful ...it's got me going through to much all alone and the way.

I feel right now I could care less if I flew off a cliff nothing in life to see, cause I'm gonna stay mobbin'.

-Lil' Soild

From The Beat: There is so much you still haven't seen - the mountains, the Mediterranean sea, where the water is so blue it makes the sky look gray, the streets of New York city, where the buildings are so high it makes that same sky just look like a bunch of blue band aids. You haven't seen the view of a crowd from up on a stage when you're graduating to get your diploma. You haven't seen the look on a boy's face when he says "daddy" to you for the first time. There is too much to live for... man up and reach for it!

Who Gives Me Hope?

When I'm feeling down or depressed my mom gives me hope. I always go to my mom because she makes me feel special all the time. If my feelings are hurt I talk to my mom and she makes me smile. I love my mom more than anything in the world. So my mom gives me hope.

Or if not my granny gives me hope. I love her so much too. These are the women of my life and they give me hope. My mom is the only person I feel comfortable telling my feelings to.

-Teddy

From The Beat: What kinds of advice and words of wisdom does she give you? What is the most valuable lesson she ever taught you? Are there certain things you remember in here that help you keep going?

Hope Something

Hope something, hope is good.

I hope I get out of jail.

I hope I make it to the NBA or the NFL.

I hope I have a wife and two kids.

Hope, people think if they got hope they got everything they want.

If people just hope and don't follow their hope what's the point of hoping.

-John

From The Beat: You bring up an interesting point. We can all sit around hoping this and hoping that. But if you have dreams you can't just hope that they come to you. You have to go chase them. Goals aren't accomplished just by hoping, they are accomplished by being determined and relentless.

Rest In Peace Tenika

Behind these walls I don't know what I'm feeling,

Jan. 21 '08 I lost my love

This is going to be a big healing.

Why was it left in my hands to do,

Now I'm sorry and I can't stop missing you.

I love you forever and nothing will change,

I sit in this cell and wonder how my life will never be the same.

Everyday and night I couldn't stop the cries,

Still this day you can see the pain in my eyes.

I have to be strong and be a man,

Knowing that every thing that happened was part of God's plan.

Tenika, I'm gonna mourn you 'till I join you.

-Teddy

From The Beat: Like you say, this is going to be a "big healing" but with time you may find that the pain gets less, and also that you find ways to help others heal when they experience tragedies like this. Does thinking about the people who love you give you hope?

I Get Stronger

Lately I've been sayin' forget the world

But it seems the world forgot me

While I'm locked up

Life goes on

Am I wrong?

But I'ma stay strong for now

Cause daddy always said he made

Me a soulja

So as days go on

And nights get colda

I get stronger

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Life can go inside too, if you use this time to grow mentally - learn whatever they have in school, read books, make a plan for your future. The thing about being a soulja is that you can't be a good one unless you know what you're fighting for. What are you fighting for?

Stress Reliever

I'm a young stunner. But I don't pop pills

Might flick around and get killed. But I do got

Skills. You make me mad and I ain't gon' feel ashamed if I touched your brain.

a lot of people know me as a very

Nice person but when I get angry I end up cussing.

When I posted on the block I had a mini ...

Boy that hit your block. Open up shop free my mind

A stress reliever me on the grind.

The elements of surprises might take people's lives

Or even catch you in a lie, or save you from a drive.

Think about your decisions because you might regret

Your action after clappin'. Murder 1 or maybe 2.

The DA screwed me but then they saved me.

One day somebody told me they shot into a crowd of people

Because they were getting eggs threw at them to me that's sounds stupid.

I could see in his eyes that he was really sorry for what happened.

Me, I have no more remorse... if you pissed me off then that's your fault.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: No more remorse you say, if that's true, it means your heart isn't as strong as it needs to be. No remorse means not caring - about who you hurt, what you do to your own life and future, but then a couple lines up you say that people know you as a "very nice person." It seems like you're stuck - caught between the person the streets want you to be, and the person your close loved ones still know you to be. Which side of you will win this conflict?

My Family and My Anger

The thing that give me hope my pride and my family. When I'm out I usually go to my mother and talk to her about my problems and things that I need help with.

Or when I get frustrated I just go get in my car and sip on some bow, and fire up some dro' and get on the road. Most of the time it's me and my friends but when I'm mad I'm usually by myself. Because when I'm a mad man I'm a dangerous man and I don't be thinking nothing good or positive at all. I be off bo' and dro', that calms my nerves when I'm tensed or mad.

-Baby T

From The Beat: When the pain gets too much, it's easy to want to turn to drugs or drink, because they dull the pain calm you down, or juice you up... the problem is that they can also destroy you, either by making you do criminal things that get you caught up, or by just distracting you from your mission - which is to finish school, get a good job, get somewhere safe, make your family proud. Isn't there another way to fight the frustration besides getting loaded?

Staff Not Feelin' My Tats

I've been up here at the Ranch fo' nine months, going on ten months, but, anyways, I've been up here at the Ranch on some square shhh, 'cause the staff be on me, 'cause I got a couple of tats, but I still be bangin'. I'm gettin' out in three and a half months, so I ain't trippin'. Damn, it's already been a year since I been out. Much love.

-Menace

From The Beat: Okay, you have some tattoos, but, like, they're already there, so why is anybody tripping? Is the real issue for the Ranch staff that they're afraid you're planning to go right back to your block when you're free, and that you'll either threaten your enemies, like you state, or worse, or that you'll die out there? How realistic are their fears?

Accident

I would say getting locked up is a accident because I believe I am a better than this and so do other people. But I'm in here, so I'ma deal with it. And if you wanted to know, this is an accident and mistake me being up in this foul place.

-Gucci Mane

From The Beat: How is it an accident that you're here? You give us no clue about that, only your statement that it is so. Did you not do what they say you did? Did you not mean to do whatever it was? Are you saying that you are better than this, meaning that you are not going to do the same things again? Give us something to understand what you mean. You say you're dealing with it, but this piece, without more, doesn't support that view.

Hope

Her voice makes me happy
And good and calm
But when she leaves
I feel sad and bad

But when she comes back
I feel like my life
Is back together

And when she kisses my lips
I feel like I could do anything I want
But then she left me
I sat and cried over and over
'Til this day I think about her
And I have hope that one day
She will come back to me

-Oscar

From The Beat: Beautiful, sweet, tender, sad poem! You don't write what happened to you two as a couple, but did she leave you because you got in some trouble? Well if you truly care about this young gal, then you would make smarter choices that don't put you in such a predicament. Damn, who wants to wait for a jailbird, when there are so many good lookin' guys in the free world?

Nothin' New

What's good with The Beat? It's yo boy, Thizzle, 'bout to get out, back to the neighborhood with my thugs. You know one year at the Ranch won't stop ya boy, because I am go' do my thang until my time is up.

But, yea, up here, up at the Ranch, it ain't nothing. We just sit around an' talk 'bout what we go' do. An' it's cold as hell up here, but you know I am used to it. I am from the (neighborhood), baby. But once I touch down, I am on the block. But, yeah, keep ya heads up.

-J Thizzle

From The Beat: Young and foolish. What will it take to see that there is a much bigger world than your little ol neighborhood. So if your time is up at 80 years old, there you are, the oldest G slangin' and bangin'. Wouldn't that be a sight.

Accidents, Outrages And Hope

Accidents happen all the time if you slippin'. An accident can happen to you. It can happen in a second, and then you gone.

What outrages me is that when the weak-ass PO's don't know where to send you to, but when they do find you a program, it's hella phony. And they wonder why we run.

What gives me hope is to get outta this weak-ass juvenile system and go to the spot and post with the homies.

-Big Shoreview

From The Beat: You need to write more on just ONE topic, not all three. We put your three pieces together, and even then, they don't tell us very much. One thing they do tell us, though, is that as long as your "hope" is focused on posting with the homies, you're going to experience a lot more of the system you say you hate. We hope you don't grow up behind these walls... but we hope you do GROW UP!

Keep It Real Talk

You know life is more than killing, and getting money from (ladies) all day. That's what I love to do, but now I am a changed man. I like to work a lot now. I know I am locked up right now, but I got my plan set. I hope that all this shhh they got planned for me works out, 'cause I am not coming back to this place, for real, 'cause I am at Log Cabin Ranch and they be acting like we are slaves up here, for real.

-Da Weather Man

From The Beat: You're right to stop getting money from young women or anybody. You can earn your own money. What plan does the staff have for you on the outs? Will you be going home? Going into independent living? If you really feel like you're being treated like a slave at Log Cabin Ranch, why don't you describe for The Beat in what ways?

My 'Hood's Gonna Be Hot Like It Got A Fever

What's good with The Beat? This you number one boy, holdin' it down at the Ranch. I get out in a few more months. They can't hold a ninja like me down forever, ya heard me? When I touch down I'm gon' have (my neighborhood) hot like it got a fever. When it's beef, I rock with my ninjas.

-Chuck

From The Beat: You love your block, but why don't you write about why it's so special, besides the violence that goes down in the street, that you hint about? Tell us more about why the 'hood that raised you means so much to you.

I Didn't Mean To

Accident that I had when I hit someone in the face with an apple in her face and almost put out her eye.

What gives me hope is getting out of this place every time I go to court.

-Steven

From The Beat: We want you to write a lot more, but only on one topic, Steven. You can't tell us much when all you give us is one sentence on each topic! We need to know the details of that accident with the apple. When did it happen? Were you hoping to hit her in the face, or was that, also, an accident? What happened to her afterwards? What happened to you afterwards? There is so much more you could have told us. Next time, please do! (We will not publish any more one or two-sentence pieces.)

What Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad when people and teachers think they could talk to me any way they could. When they do that, that's when I go off and crack his shhh, and I bet he would not talk like that again.

When I was at school, a teacher was being racist, and the girl was black.

-Pat Pizz

From The Beat: Teachers should never do what you describe here. But who do you think would pay the biggest price if you reacted the way you say you would? Can you think of more grown-up ways to handle disrespectful teachers or disrespectful people in general?

What Outrages You

What really makes me angry is this war we out here fighting. Not the war that's going on in the streets, but the war the we fighting in the streets. The beef shhh is crazy. Ninjas is dropping like rain drops out there.

Ninjas is out there thinking they sick, but really soft as cotton. They out there tryin' to make a name for they selves, but once they get a shot, they go cryin' to they mom. When they get caught up, they start running they mouth like a person at a auction.

They know how this life style is so if they go complain then they shouldn't be in it. That's what really makes me angry for real. Ninjas just need to stop running they mouth and live they life to the fullest 'cause that's what I'm gone do. We all we got.

-Mike

From The Beat: The truth is, Mike, we're not sure that you know "how this lifestyle is." If you did, you would realize that the entire criminal justice system, from juvie to death row, rests on a foundation of snitches — people who are caught up willing to trade what they know for lighter treatment. Complaining about it won't change this reality of what will always be so. There's only one way to keep this from happening in your life, and that is to change your life. If you don't do the things that give power to others (whether cops on the street, DAs and judges, or your own homies who know what you're up to), then you will have nothing to complain about.

Jesus Gives Me Hope

What gives me hope is Jesus because I'm going through a lot right now. I talk to him every day and night about my struggle. He don't say nothing back, but I know he hears me and go walk with me through this. I just gotta be patient and make it like Trey sings.

I know (my homie) in heaven, and he go give me hope.

-Bm

From The Beat: You say that Jesus doesn't answer you when you talk to him, but maybe you just aren't listening. Maybe the answer he's giving you is right here, in the consequences you face for not following what he taught. Maybe he's waiting for you to hear what he is telling you.

What Gives You Hope?

Respecting myself on what I do. On something I'm good. My hobby is making music, being respectful and making my money just to live.

-Playboy

From The Beat: We turned your one sentence piece into a two sentence piece. But either way, this is just a lazy response that we won't do again. What kind of music do you like to make. What does "being respectful" mean to you? How can you make money without putting your freedom at risk? Give us some real thinking and writing, or lose your spot in The Beat.

A Crucial Accident

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na holding it down with my thugs.

But back to the topic. Man me and my two cousins was in the rental with three females. We was going to Tanforan Mall, and we crossed in front of a 18 wheeler and it hit us in the back. We flipped 15 times. My bro's girlfriend flew out the windshield, and bro went to jail for drivin' a car without a license. So that was my accident.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: What happened to the girl who flew through the windshield? It's no accident that you got into a car with an unlicensed driver; that's a decision you made with terrible consequences. Plus, we bet that that 18 wheeler hit you because the driver cut him off too quickly. Driving is not a right but a privilege, and it requires not just skill, but judgment. If we needed proof of that, this "accident" gives us all we need. (We're glad that you are still in this world and able to write about it...)

My Mom Gives Me Hope

What's good with The Beat? Something that gives me hope is my mom. She's someone that's keep hope in my life that I'm go get out and do go. That's one person that gives me hope.

-Acie

From The Beat: You are so lucky to have a mom that inspires you. Not everybody is so lucky. When you think of all that she's done for you, how can you give her hope?

Back Again

What it do, Beat? Me, just chillin', waitin' to go to court. But I'm back again. I was mad, but I can't do nothing but be mad at myself.

But these crackers will give you a hundred years And have yo' mamma leaving out the courtroom with tears.

Crackers don't love the air we breathe, for real. Take a ninja live from them, they don't know how it feel. All right then, Beat.

-Young K

From The Beat: Unfortunately, this piece answers the question we asked in our "From The Beat" response to your other piece. Apparently, you were not able to use the time you've already given up to the system to figure out a way to stay out of it, and that means you're letting the time do you instead of the other way around. Time is the one thing we can never get back in life, so we hope you start thinking in new ways. It's not about "crackers" and "ninjas" (there are more white people on death row than black people, for example). It's about taking responsibility for your own behavior, and facing the consequences when you don't.

Hard Talk

What's up, Beat? It's me again, Young Kada. But yeah, it be these new dudes out here, acting like they with the movement, but really ain't. Then we got these hard talkers, yellin' this and that, but ain't 'bout nothing they be talking 'bout.

Then I got this staff always talking shhh and tellin' me that he will put me in my room, and I tell them like this: How y'all gone give me time if I'm doing time?

But, yeah, I get at y'all later, Beat.

-Young K

From The Beat: Stop worrying about what those "new dudes" are doing, and start worrying about what you're doing. Are you thinking about how to keep from doing time in the future? That's the only way to use this time to your benefit. The staff will always be in control of you, if you give them that power by handing away your freedom. What are you going to do once you get out of here to keep that from happening?

An "Accident" With Consequences

Well on Monday, I was with my homie and we just left from my house. We were driving on the Divisadero to Church Street. But when we almost got there, my bra started to speed. But at the same time, he did not notice that the police was on the opposite side. So the cops made a U-turn, then pulled us over.

Before we pulled over, he crashed into a car and made the whole thing worse. When they came to the car... well you know what they asked and said. But anyway, then the other cop asked me for my ID. Then I told him I didn't have one, so they asked what's my name. Then when I gave it to them, it... well you know I'm writin' this, so yeah, that's my story.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: You know, Ricardo, we don't have much sympathy for people who get behind the wheel of a car and put innocent people at great danger. It's one thing to put yourself in a dangerous position, but how would you deal with it if that car your homie crashed into had a baby in it, and the baby was killed? Of course, the consequences to you would be far worse, but what about the consequences to that innocent child who just happened to be in the way of fools?

Things That Make Me Mad; Things That Give Me Hope

Things that make me mad is when people think they could talk to you any way they want. People talk to you like they're your parents. Some people think they could take advantage of you. People around me think they better than you because of your race. The reason I think that's unfair is because everybody should be treated equally. I think it's outrageous when people like teachers treat you like you're their child, and that's why students always have problems.

My mom and brothers give me hope when I was feeling down. They was the ones who brought me up.

-Leonard

From The Beat: We agree with you, Leonard, that everyone should be treated equally. We hope you know that it doesn't matter what others say or think about you. It only matters what you do.

What Outrages Mongo

What outrages me is when someone tries to take what belongs to me, 'cause if it belongs to me, that means that means I worked hard for it. But even if it was given to me, I advise you to get your own of whatever it is.

If you try to take something from me, things will get ugly, and we don't want that. I do what I have to do to defend mine. It's the same if you mess with my family, but the outcome could be worse.

-Mongo

From The Beat: No, we certainly don't want things to get ugly... Can we assume from what you've written that you don't steal anything from others? That wouldn't make sense to do something that outrages you if it's done to you.

What Gives Me Hope

What gives me hope is God. That the only person that keeps me hoping, you dig. Ain't no person but God I have hope in.

Well anyways, what's good with The Beat? Man, it's yo' boy V-Guttah still holding it down, trying to get out back to that good ol' life I live you dig. Back to the block. Back to making that fast money.

-V-Guttah

From The Beat: Right... back to the "good ol' life" (that led you here), "back to the block" (that led you here), and back to "making that fast money" (that led you here). Here's our question: If your only hope lies with God, then what do you think God is hoping from you?

An Outrage

What's cracking? It's that ninja Lano. Was it an accident when the judge told me you got 12 months in the halls? Hell yeah. It was outrageous. But after a while, I wasn't tripping. I'm about to knock it out.

-Yung Lano

From The Beat: Outrageous? Maybe... But an accident? How? When you write, it's the details that make a piece good or not. Why are you outraged by the consequences of your acts? Or, did you not do what the court said you did?

What Gives Me Hope?

What do you do when you are sad? When I am sad I go to my mom and dad for help an' they make me happy.

-Young Quez

From The Beat: Two sentences! Don't be lazy, Quez! It will not make your life easier. What do your parents do to make you happy? What makes you sad? Can you be happy if you give away your freedom to this system that takes you from your mom and dad? Next time, we won't publish just two sentences from you. You are capable of much more.

Accidents

The reason that I'm in was an accident I was supposed to stay clean, but I smoked and that was an accident, you dig. One last thing keep yo friends close and yo enemies closer 'cause yo' friends will be the one that toast ya.

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: We're curious to know how smoking could be an accident. Maybe you just didn't know what you were doing...

What Outrages Me

What outrages me is that the game is spoiled. I used to always hear old stories of real G's in the game, and it used to be poppin fa' real. Every man was his own man; when you make a decision to bust a real power move, it's yo' decision.

Now the game is straight spoiled. Ain't nobody real out there. This whole shhh is ran by fear. A ninja would act like he the sickest ninja, then when a real ninja come, he turn into straight noodles, feel me. That's what outrages me.

-Fed Up Gloss

From The Beat: What's really changed "the game" is that it's easier to get a gun now than to get an education — and guns in the hands of children can only have disastrous consequences! What really outrages us is when we read what passes for "real" in your vocabulary. If we were to accept your definition of "a real ninja," we would have to call Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey and Thurgood Marshall all fake. You're "real" but they're "fake." Outrageous!

No Plans To Change Much

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy Mook sittin' in this weak-ass unit with my goons ready to go to the spot. But I'm 'bout to have me a Mookey Jr. in a couple of months, so I'm happy about that movement.

But when I get out, I don't plan on changing all that much, even though I changed a lot. I miss the outs and BM. Can't put her name down, ya dig. I love you lil' bra. Keep yo' head.

-Mook

From The Beat: If having a baby does not make you change much, then you are not ready to be a father. Making a baby is the easiest thing in the world; a chicken can do it. But being a father — being there to take care of a baby and a child, guiding him or her along the right path — that takes a man. Until you recognize that having a baby changes everything, you really can't call yourself a responsible adult. We wish you luck, and hope that you become your baby's father.

How?

What 'sup with The Beat? You know how people be beefing and stuff, and the staff say just let it go. Well, how you gone let it go when people just keep talking shhh? Me? I be willing to let shhh go, but when I do, people just keep talking shhh. So how am I supposed to let things go?

I'm asking y'all fo' advice. But if you say just ignore them, other people gone think you a sucka, ya feel me? That's why I can't let things slide 'cause people gone start calling you a sucka and other names. I can't let that slide, ya dig?

So let me ask you, how am I supposed to let it slide? This ya boy Chris. I'm out.

-Lil' Canon

From The Beat: You're in one of those situations where you only have bad choices to select from. Since both your options carry consequences, you must decide which is worth more: what people think about you (and even say about you), or getting DRBs or even new charges. It's easy for us to say ignore it (which we believe is the better option), but we're not in your shoes. One thing we know, however, is that it takes great courage not to respond to name-calling.

Ain't No One Stopping Me

Wha's up with The Beat, you feels me? What it do, you feels me? This be your boy. I've been here for two months, but you feels, your homie gotta do the time.

Went to court and messed me over. The DA and the judge said I was a menace to society. They said I wasn't capable to be on the streets. Now I just chillin' and waiting with the homies, so they could swoop me up so I could go to the Ranch and complete my program.

They trying keep me 10 to 12 months from the 'hood, but you feel me, ain't no one stopping me. Once I complete the program I'm back to the 'hood.

-Moreno

From The Beat: Come on, Moreno. Are you so blind that you can't see what's right in front of you? If "they" can stop you for a year (and they have), they can also stop you for five years, ten years — your entire life! More than 2,000 juveniles in California have been sentenced to Life In Prison Without the possibility of Parole! They will never see the light of day, never touch a female, never walk on the street, never wear anything but state-issue, never eat a home-cooked meal... If you don't want the same thing to happen to you, it's time that you stop pointing the finger at others (the DA, the judge), and start accepting some personal responsibility. If not, you're throwing away your future!

Accidents

When I was little, my auntie got in a accident in a cab. I call a accident something you do, not intentionally do. It's something you do without trying to do.

-Leonard

From The Beat: Please do not write about all three topics, because when you do, you can't really tell us much about any one of them. We combined two of your pieces into one for that reason. And in this piece, you could have told us so much more... What happened to your auntie? Is she all right? How do you avoid accidents? Next time, choose just one subject and write a lot more about that one.

No Snitching

What's good, The Beat Within? Shhh, it's just ya boy, The Dude, ready to touch these streets and do my thang. But I'm go' let it follow like water to a sink.

What's good wit' these ninjas snitching an' then they turn around and act like they solid? I'm lookin' at these ninjas like, "What do you think? This the Free Respect Give Away?" These soft ninjas better get it right before they get played like something that get played wit'!

Y'all know I don' never snitch, or go out like a sucka!

Ninjas actin' like it's cookies and cream wit' milk on the side up here at The Ranch. But if they don't know what it be on the streets when they get out, then they go find out it's hot I'm go end it here wit' one love.

-The Dude

From The Beat: Obviously you are speaking from experience when it comes to osnitching, so give us some examples! Why do you care what others at the ranch do? Mind your own business and get your mind right. It's only words Dude!

What Gives Me Hope

The stuff that give me hope is people that talk to me and show me the right stuff and speak the real and then lift me up and keep me from stressing and push me forward to achieve in life.

-Lil' Cali

From The Beat: This is only a first sentence, Lil' Cali, not a real piece. One sentence is an hour workshop is the lazy man's way out, and laziness does not move you very far. Who are the people you are describing? Can you give us an example of when someone told you something that lifted you, that kept you from stressing? Can you tell us who pushed you forward, and what you want to achieve in life. We won't publish any more one-sentence pieces from you.

Things That I Wonder In My Head

What's good wit' The Beat? It's ya boy, Chink, holdin' it down at the Ranch wit' my bros.

For today's assignment I am going to speak upon my vicious "thinking." I feel the world is going against me at various moments. It's like every thought that occurs in my brain, it's all negative. Visions of me under the world, gettin' my mellon scattered throughout the gravel. Everyone I trust and love is stabbin' me slowly but surely, decreasing my strength, trying to have me dig in the dirt with no return. It seems like I am a ghost in this society with so many individuals. Subtracted from the world.

I also think about my future--basically to get money if it's positive or negative. Well, that's some of the things I think about while I'm observing the community.

Well, I am going to holla at y'all later. Until we meet again, Chink is goin' to be holdin' it down like I been doin'.

-Chinky

From The Beat: Why this thinking? Why would the world zero in on you? Can think of reasons why you feel this way? Does it boil down to some of the choices you have made in your young life? You are disappointed, but what about the ones who care for you? Also, what can you do to make things better? Figure out your role in what is causing these thoughts?

Should Have Stayed

What's up with The Beat? Yeah, is your boy, Ryder. Yeah, I'm back. I went to Walden House for twenty minutes. Shhh, that was dumb. I should have stayed with the program. I was gone for two weeks and they raided ma homegirl's house. Shhh, I shoulda known not to be there. Somethin' told me I should not have, but oh, well, my fault. I shoulda just stayed with the program.

-Lil' Ryder

From The Beat: Yes, you should have. Does this mean that next time you'll stick it out, even if it's not what you hope for or want? Children run from their problems. Adults face them. It's time...

On MY Mind

What's good with The Beat? It's that ninja Meez in the max. unit. I'm doin' what I got to do.

But damn, I went to court on the 31st of January and they dropped a few charges. But I lost my 707, and on the 27th of this month, they gone transfer me to 850. And then I got to start my case all over in the audit system. But I'ma make bail, so it's sweet.

-Meez

From The Beat: Making bail is about the only "sweet" thing we can see in this situation. We hope the experience of an adult jail is enough to make you realize that prison is just another form of slavery, except that these are chains of your own making. What you've made you can unmake. We hope you do.

What Outrages Me

What outrages me is these fake-ass ninjas that's like the big and bad, but deep down inside soft as butter. It outrages me because they not with it like they say they with it. You see them on the outs and they hard, and you see them here, you see they soft.

I go hard regardless with are without my ninjas but for all the weak ninjas, stay weak. All the real stay real ya dig.

-Mook

From The Beat: What outrages us is people who put the focus on others instead of themselves. You're the one who has given away his freedom to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do, so it seems to us that you could use your time more wisely by figuring out what you need to do — and especially what you need to stop doing — to regain the control you have given away to the system.

Accidents...

I remember when I was at the ocean fishing with my dad on a sunny weekend. After a couple of hours of fishing, we were getting ready to leave 'cause the waves were getting hella big.

When we tried to leave the engine didn't want to start. Then after about 10 minutes of the boat not starting a massive ass wave came and flipped the boat over. Then I blacked out. All I remember is waking up in a hospital.

I think God gave me another chance to live because my head was split open and I had hypothermia. So that was my little accident I had.

-Survivor

From The Beat: With so much news focusing on the loss and frailty of life, it's easy to forget just how resilient we can be. That "little" accident of yours could have easily left you dead, but you were somehow able to persevere. If you believe in a higher being, you're right to thank him, and maybe that angel over your head as well.

Wish You Were Here

I wish you have been there for me,
But you left when I was still three,
I hardly know you but yet I still care,
Even though you're not I pretend you were there,
When time's got hard I needed your help,
But some how I didn't when TIMES felt like hell.
I still love you for putting me in this world,

- Longing For You

From The Beat: You're such an amazing person for still loving this person although he/she left when you were young. This poem encourages us to be there for our family and friends. Thanks for sharing this, and keep on sharing this message with the people you meet and know.

My Baby Girl

What up Beat.' It's your homeboy Chucky. You all might know me as the boy that has tats on his face and neck.

What gives me hope is my beautiful eleven month old daughter. Her name is Corrine. She has hope on my life a lot. Without her I would be in prison or dead. But she keeps me from that 'cause she needs me and I need her. So to me that is hope, having your family by your side 100%. So beat I'm out for now but not forever.

- Chucky

From The Beat: We totally agree with you. Hope is so related to our interdependency with others, whether they be family or friends. There's rarely such a thing as hope that's completely divorced from others. We always need someone to lean on, and there's always somebody who needs us. So we hope both you and your daughter grow to have a great relationship.

When I Get Out I'm Going To...

When I get out
I'm going to try hard to stay out.
When I get out
I'm going to go back to school.
When I get out
I'm going to find a job.
When I get out
I'm going to talk to my ex.
When I get out
I'm going to get my life on track.
"That's what I'll do when I get out."

-JI

From The Beat: All of these are admirable goals that we can definitely see you accomplishing. Do you have a plan for how you'll go about achieving these goals? Do you foresee any problems or obstacles to fulfilling your goals? Although it's important to remain optimistic about life, it's also important to keep in mind what you might come up against and try to think of ways to deal with problems before they happen. We really hope you at least never go back here and can stay in school.

A Quad Accident

I ride/race quads and on my free time I like to go to Hollister hills and practice. There was one weekend I went with my sister, brother-in-law, and his friend Jack. We did a trail ride and went on the backside of the mountain. I like trailing rides to build endurance.

After a 30-minute trail ride we got back to the main road and headed to camp. I was being stupid hauling ass down the road in fourth gear on a straightaway and came into a big sweeping let turn. I came into the turn smooth and I hit the gas a little too hard and broke the back tires loose and the quad slid sideways and once I was sliding completely sideways the tires caught on edge and it threw me off and tossed me about 20 feet and the quad rolled down behind me and ended up on top of my back (I was facedown) a car stopped and some people jumped out and pushed the quad off me. I got up and walked it off.

My quad was pretty messed up when I took a look at it. My steering stem was bent, blew out a tire, ripped my seat off, cracked my plastics, and beat my sub-frame. I was pissed. After the crash that was the end of my day.

-Stark

From The Beat: Sounds like a pretty gruesome accident you had. While you may have made a poor decision coming into the turn, you learn best from your mistakes. We're impressed by your passion for motocross and your willingness to get up and try again, though in this case it was probably best that you called it a day!

Someone

If there was someone who keep the pain I keep
If there was someone who know's how to stand up in the rain,
If there is someone who left far away from their family to help them out
and now the someone is lock up for something he didn't do

Now that someone feels so bad for leaving their family
I would like to know the someone is hurt and told him that I am the someone too.

-Jose

From The Beat: These are deep words Jose. Through thick and thin it seems that the one constant in your life is your love of family. That is a powerful thing and it isn't going anywhere. If you could speak to your faraway family, what would you tell them?

This Struggle

I remember, growing through the struggle.
how does it feel, when no one loved you.
how does it sound,
when all your family talks shhh about you now.
I was labeled at an early age
a nobody, which filled my heart with rage
I was raised in the south bay.
Eliminating all my enemies with hate
I wish I could turn my life around.
My life too complicated to even understand
why I live this life this way
full of pain and agony
this is the beginning, not the end
Ace out until we meet again

- Ace

From The Beat: You said that you wish you could turn your life around but you can't. I'm not so sure about that. I think that's what the world wants you to think, so that you won't succeed. But we believe in you, and that you still have a fighting chance, not just to survive, but to thrive in your community. Life may just seem like one big struggle given the choice of lifestyle, but don't look at it like that. Take it one struggle at a time, and make the right choices in each of them. Pretty soon, you'll find yourself climbing up and up.

Philosophy

An elderly cannibal Sage and a Missionary were comparing their philosophies. The cannibal reminisced about the tribal wars he fought and how he had eaten his foes, the missionary said, "we fight wars for higher reason, for truth, for defense of democracy, and for freedom".

"You must eat many people?" said the cannibal.

"Oh no." Said the missionary, "we don't eat human beings."

Then said the cannibal; "you have no reason to kill each other."

I like this short story because it makes sense. Why do we kill each other? Over turf, over drugs? Is it worth it? I'll get back to you next week Beat.

-Adrian

From the Beat: Why do we kill each other? Why don't you ask your peers? Why don't you ask the community? How can you get people to realize that life is too precious to go around stealing it from somebody?

Very Sad

Very sad I'm in here
April ain't here with me

Learning a lot about my self and others

Electing people I share my business with carefully

Need to hurry up and get sentenced

Trying to hold composure with some of these females

Irritated & moody

Nervous about court

East Palo Alto all day baby!

-Savage

From The Beat: We can understand you being sad because you're locked up. You can't be say all day everyday. Might as well make the best of your stay here in the halls. No matter what happens keep smiling because that's something nobody can take away from you. Having a good positive attitude no matter where you at, will help you go a long way.

My Friend

Yup, she got me mad because I told her about a two faced girl and that's what she told me. I wouldn't want to kick it or chop it up with someone I think is cool with me. So yeah, I told her and she didn't really get me. Oh well, she makes her own choices. I still care about her hella. Damn, but yeah, I was hella mad. I was hitting the wall 'til I bled. I hella care for her and she's the only one I really care for in here. Stay up.

-Jaz

From The Beat: Friends can get mad at each other, but the anger doesn't last. Friends are too precious to lose. You'll be laughing at it soon enough.

My Wishes

Wishing I was wit' you

I miss you very much boo-boo

People told me shhh I thought wasn't true

The only reason for that is because I trusted you

But the truth be told the stuff was true

You still my girl and you know I will always love you

I believe in second chances and I will give it to you

They got us separated now so we can't be together

But all I ask is you do me a favor

Never cheat never lie never do me dirty

Until then you always have me by my side

-Positive Savage

From the Beat: We wish you the best of luck on your life, but we do want you to know that that person that you like better be proving themselves to you that they really like you. Because people that cheat sadly, will cheat again especially if they can get away with it. So be a little more careful. We don't want to see you get heart broken.

My Valentine's Day

Well, as you know, today's Valentine's Day. Today's supposed to be a happy day, but for me it's a painful day. Here's a poem about someone who meant so much to me:

It was Valentines Day. That's when you left and passed away. You didn't suffer. I'm glad you didn't feel the pain. But today I wish you could be just a phone call away. I was surprised when they said you were no longer alive. My heart sank to my feet and for a second I couldn't even breathe. I loved you so much. Why did you have to leave? I wish it was me that had to leave. There's so much sweet memories of you, me and the family. It's crazy how you left without warning me.

You were different in all kinds of ways. I remember your favorite things. If you were here, the family wouldn't be so far away. Grandpa and grandma went their separate ways. And for the rest of the family - they gave up and moved away. Well uncle, there's so much more to say, but I have to stop before my eyes tear up. Uncle Peter, I love you very much and don't worry, I'll keep in touch. Much love, your niece.

-Ronnie's Girl

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss, and your family's loss. You'll be seeing him in your dreams. In the meantime, it's really OK to tear up. It's important to let those feelings out. Grief is an essential emotion. Honor your own grief, and your Uncle Peter, by crying when you feel like it.

Snitches

I may seem very friendly

But snitches make me angry

'Cause in the pen it ain't no joke

I'll stop the words comin' out your throat

But god told me at night

Never let anger take over your might

'Cause you'll be the one who'll live in flight

Forever and ever, until death wants to fight

-Lynoodie

From The Beat: We had to change one line because it was too threatening, too graphic. But still, we admire your skills as a poet. We hope you're truly listening to what you say God tells you, because it's true. One more thing: the entire criminal justice system is based on snitches, and it always will be. From the street to the pen, there will always be people willing to trade what they know for a better deal. That leaves you with only one way to win the game: don't play it!

A Presidential Homie

Well what up Beat!?

I'm writing from Santa Clara County, of course it's "San Jose."

Well my achievements would be when I'll grow up to become president. If I were president I would try my best to help out the community and the people.

Then the little stuff I would take care of like build more shelters and lock all the bums up and make them get a job.

I would build a cannibus club right in the heart of San Jose.

After that I would travel the United States and try to help other people.

Well that's all I got for 2day so stay up.

- The Homie R

From The Beat: Aiming high is an important part of having goals and accomplishing achievements. It's great that you want to build more shelters for people and want to help people in general. Have you ever thought about why homeless people are homeless, though? Why they are on the streets and why, maybe, they are unable to get or hold down a job? Locking them up is not as simple as it seems. As someone behind bars, would you say that locking you up is the way to solve why you committed a crime in the first place?

Plenty Of Achievements

I have a lot of achievements that I have had in my life. I want to achieve on getting out and finishing my high school education and also I want to go to San Jose State University.

After college I want to start my own business. I want to stay out of trouble and get my name cleared from the system.

I achieved on making it to my junior year of high school. I hope to get to finish it because I'm locked up it's going to be difficult to.

This is my first time and it really changed me.

After I get out I'm going to concentrate a lot more on my education. I plan to achieve on making my parents proud, and that I'm gonna do something good with my life.

I was only on probation for 1 month before I got arrested, exactly 30 days.

When I sit in my cell I think to myself, 'Man, how did I let this happen to myself? Why was I being so stupid?' It really opened my eyes to life.

My main achievement I want to achieve is finish my education on a high level and making something out of my life. I'm going to achieve this goal by staying out of trouble, keeping my life on the right path and keep focused to my education.

My parents and family will keep me focused and give me the best advice to stay ahead and not fall behind.

-Alberto

From The Beat: It is clear that you have a lot of ambition and drive to succeed and make something of yourself. Congratulations—that is the first step in staying out of trouble! How do you plan to achieve your goals when you return home? What obstacles do you see being presented in your path? We only ask because it is necessary to think of the roadblocks before they come across you in order to not be defeated by them. Our best wishes to you!

What Give You Hope?

In the deepest darkest despair

I feel hope so very near

But I fear someday it will disappear

'Cause the life in me calls it fear

The love in me took my life away

'Cause it followed a girl who took my breath away

She was the one I thought I could count on

To love me while I was blamed on

But who could wait for a murderer

Who took the game a little further

Now I wait in thoughts and try to cope

For one day to have more hope

-Lynoodie

From The Beat: What gives us hope is your questioning mind/Something both out and in that's hard to find/It gives us hope because it's bound to grow/As it unfolds, no one can predict where it will go/What you've done in the past, you can put it behind you/Don't let yourself be tricked into thinking it defines you/Jesus took a thief into heaven, not for what he'd done/But, instead, for the honorable man he'd become

Hope

When I think about hope, I am reminded of the song "Vindicated" by Dashboard Confessional, especially the part that goes, "hope dangles on a string like slow spinning redemption winding in and winding out the shine of which has caught my eye". It's a great song that you should listen to when you're down.

-Wolverine

From the Beat: That sounds like a great song to listen to when you're down. Have you ever thought about creating your own song when you're down? What else can you do?

An Achievement

One thing I want to achieve is to own my own business and make a lot of money. I don't know what kind of business I want to run but I'm gonna do it 'cause I want to make money. But first I have to get all my credits and graduate high school.

After I achieve graduating high school, I'm going to college to learn about business. Getting a college diploma is one of my main goals I want to achieve. After that I can do whatever I want to do and I can do anything with my life.

Oh ya I almost forgot to write this first thing I want to achieve is getting out of the hall, getting off probation, and staying out of trouble.

- Aa

From The Beat: You have a lot of great goals for your life. Owning a business and being financially successful are admirable goals. Have you made any plans for how you want to achieve this? What sorts of obstacles, if any, do you think you might encounter? What do you think the effects will be of your success? Never be afraid to dream big, but always make sure you have a plan to make it happen!

It's A Big Word

What's up Beat. What it do, it's your boy Marco coming from this unit. I'm just here writing today's topic and today's topic is achievements.

Man that's a big word. But anyways, mmm, let's see what would I like to achieve. I would like to achieve by getting out of here and not coming back.

I have been here four times already. I can't be coming back no more because I'm about to turn 18 and next step is county and I don't want to go there. It's not that I'm scared it's just that I don't want to have a record when I turn 18. And I also want to get out of probation, clean my record and love someone in life.

Well that's all I have to say for now late until next time maybe. Arato...

- Marco.

From The Beat: We really hope you can stay out of here and achieve that goal in life. Wanting to stay out of trouble and wanting to love someone are great goals in life. How do you see yourself accomplishing that? What do you think you can start to do now to make sure you can accomplish both of these plans?

When I'm Down

Whenever I'm down and I don't know what to do, I write lyrics on the page, I write lyrics that are true. So when you're down and you don't know what to do, just do what your best at, and do what you do.

-Big Keno

From the Beat: That's a good way to get your feelings off your chest. Just write it down you'll feel a lot better.

Getting Out Of Here

Something that I would like to achieve is to get out of juvie and stay out, get back into school, get a job to be able to get a new car and to save money to go to college to become something in life and to stay out of trouble. So I could move forward in life and not backwards all the time. Because I want to do something with my life. That's some things I would like to achieve.

-Bb

From The Beat: It's great that you want to stay out of juvenile hall and want to keep your life on track. Have you given any thought to what 'keeping your life on track' would mean? Do you have any career goals or other more specific aspirations for your life? What sorts of obstacles do you think you might encounter? We're glad you're motivated to stay out!

Tough Breed

Raised amongst a tough breed
so if put under pressure we won't crack,
can no longer trust those beside me ,
I've lost faith in all around me,
I don't even trust my own shadow,
Slowly fighting for my freedom
But it seems to be a one-sided battle,
And with so called homies turning they
Back it seems they don't want me to win,
And I find myself laughin' like a
Madman thinking of the situation I'm in,
Where's the loyalty that was once pledged,
By two youngstas with nothing to lose?
Does honor no longer apply?
Or did someone simply just change the rules?
Now the judge wants to throw me an L
So I'm gonna throw this back at em,
Slippin' through the system
havin' them gaspin "Damn I thought we had em!"
With the D-A tightening his grip
He's tryin make me cop a plea,
But our Latinos refuse to put our head down
so we won't go quietly.

-Shotgun

From the Beat: ...And off you go to prison. A lot of people talk about their tough upbringings in The Beat. How has that made you into the person you are today? You also vent some anger about a lack of loyalty. What is important about loyalty to you and how do you practice it in your life?

Love Story

I remember the first time I made love to a female I was on my O.T. from the Ranch, I won't ever forget this because it was in the back seat of my mom's car while she was visiting her man in prison. I was in the middle of having a lot of fun when about five corrections officers came to the car and pulled me out. They had grabbed me and threw me against the car cause they thought I was an inmate.

Then my girl gave me my shirt and my 501s. then I put them on and I showed them my ID so they made me get dressed and we had to wait for my mom's visit to be over. I will never forget that moment!

- Green Eyes

From The Beat: Sounds like you had a pretty close encounter! Tell us more about how different it feels visiting a prison versus being incarcerated yourself.

My Uncles Saved me!

I remember when I was walking to a park to a family BBQ. When I got half way to the park I started to get followed by a lot of rival gang members; when I got to the park they had started to jump me when my uncles came. That is when my uncles saved me!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Family is a very common topic that a lot of people write about in the Beat. Moments like these seem to be the reason why: family members standing up for each other. Besides helping you defend yourself, how else have your uncles affected your life? Are they people whom you could consider role models?

My Secret Confession

- Norbit's Love

From the Beat: Wow you spent all this time writing a ridiculous piece. What is there to say about this "confession, give it to your special friend. It seems like you have a real talent for satire. This is a funny piece and you should think about extending your humorous writing tactics to another subject.

My unit

Well well well what's up Beat
It's homeboy Shorty once again
Coming at you from this unit!
Even though I am not suppose
To be here but yeah,
What can I say.
Well just tired
Bored as hell
I'm just waiting to get released.
People say that my unit sucks,
but really it's hella sick as hell.
I think this is the best unit I been in
since I been here
I been in plenty, but this one
Whooooo that shhh is sick. You go
Your own weights in here it all legit but
Yeah well this cholo is out and
To all, keep you head up
-Till then...

-Shorty

From the Beat: What is so sick about your current unit? You say you're bored a lot. What are some things you could do to occupy yourself? Tell us about some of the things you enjoy doing while in this unit.

Broken Leg

My accident that I had is with my homeboy at his house. Me and him were playing around with each other. Then he pushed me and I broke my leg. I told him I could not walk no more, my leg is broken.

Then he said, "no it's not!"

I said, "yes it is.

Than he looked at it and he said, "sorry it was an accident, dog you know that." Then he took me to the doctor's, that was cool. Then after we were done we left and he gave me one of his cars so that was cool too.

One year later my leg was ok. That's all I have to say today.

-Playboy

From The Beat: It's good to hear that your story has a happy ending. It's too bad that your friend accidentally pushed you, but it's nice that he took you to the doctors. Hopefully you still keep in contact with each other and help each other now as you both did in the past.

The Super Duper Bowl Flo

Pads slammin' pads, cats getting rushed
On the fields where the cats steady talking getting
hushed

Its game day come on bring yo' game mane

Time to get them grass stains

Time to feel the damn pain

Out here we don't play fo fun

Asks Archie Mannings son

Matter-a-fact ask Brady

His accuracy be dumb crazy

And if we fo' a loss

I'll pass it to my boy Moss

When it comes to the bowl ya Giants ain't playin

But I bet you the Pats will do the slayin'

But just sit on ya recliner and pull out the six pack

And watch while Vrabel don't miss a sack

And while you watchin the game yo' girl messin wit
D-mani

-D-mani

From the Beat: Nice flo, although the Super Bowl turned out a little differently from your prediction, and you sat in the hall. Something about the last line doesn't really seem to fit in, though. Keep writing, D-MANI, you obviously have talent.

My Achievements

My goals are if I get shipped out to live with my grandma in New Jersey and do my year probation, down there. But I am gonna tell them all I'm from the West Coast, but they going to hate because I'm going to the East Coast. But I'll take care of business and do my program so when I come back from doing my program. Then I'm gonna put in hella work, so stay up.

-G

From The Beat: A lot of the most terrible things in human history have happened because one person considered another so different from him that the person seemed to be of a different species. Why do you think it matters so much what coast you grew up on that people are killed every year for it? Doesn't that seem like a silly thing to die for? And putting in work? Please. Wake up!

Love

You in that unit I'm in this one
Our love stay strong even though were doin' time
I wish I could see you hold you and kiss you
But I know I can't so I let my imagination
Run wild and think about the good we been through
We been through it all, thick and thin
I hate that I have to express my love
To you in this Beat Within.
When you get out I hope you hold it
Down for me and be there to support me
Mentally. Baby girl I love you
I hope you feel the same for me
I'm cut it short, stay strong
Good luck in court

- Lil' Slick

From the Beat: It's great that even though you are locked up you can still feel that close and connected to your girl. How much better is it on the "outs?" Could you use that as motivation for staying out of trouble? And if she is incarcerated as well, do you think that has contributed to whatever happened that got you in here? We hope you support her "mentally" too. It is a two-way street young man!

Hope

What gives me hope is knowing that the homies from my barrio are gonna be waiting for me and new lil' homitos gonna be jumped in my barrio that what gives me hope to come out and see my hood and my family.

When I get released they'll all be waiting for me if they're not locked up.

-Lil' Psycho

From The Beat: It's important to have hope for something beyond your current situation. We understand your anxiousness in reconnecting with your friends, but we challenge to think about how you can maintain important friendships while staying out of this place. What can you and your homies do to stay within legal bounds? We think in your best interest, unless a level four prison yard is a part of your life, you must make a better choice upon your return home and leave the so-called homies who are so ready to pull you back down.

Life...

Life is a b.

Life is never fair. Life is full of risks,
if it's worth it, take it. Love those
who love you. But don't let love blind
you. The truest shhh you can do is live
life to the fullest. Do what you gotta do
and never give up. Trust no one.

- Celoso

From The Beat: Like anyone, your outlook on life speaks to the experiences you have gone through. Trust is essential to forming and maintaining relationships, but is your willingness to trust based only on others' willingness to trust you? Sometimes it's necessary to trust a stranger before they can trust you. Do you agree?

Racing

I've been racing quads for a few years now. I started racing in the AMA series at Hollister Hills and at local fairgrounds.

I tried to go pro so hard, I started racing a Honda 250r and then a Honda 400ex. I raced those for almost two years until they both broke down within two months of each other. I sold them both and saved a little bit of money to buy a Honda 450r. After I got enough money to get the quad I continued racing.

I met a guy named David S. in Morgan Hills through my cousin, my cousin said he raced quads pro in monster truck shows. I talked to him for a while and he invited me to a party at his house.

I didn't see him after that for a while. I kept racing and practicing and one day I got a call from David, I remember that day perfectly, I was on my way home from Hollister Hills from practicing. He told me he didn't have enough people for his team to race on the weekend and he asked if I would come race with him. I was stoked when he asked me if I would race with him.

I went to Santa Rosa for the weekend to race in a monster truck show. I took over all third place for the weekend and David was first overall and he like how good I did so he asked if I'd join his team so I raced pro in Monster Truck Shows for a year on the west coast.

I've been from Salinas all the way to Sacramento racing in Monster Truck Shows. Racing with the pros is a lot more fun, you get prize money and parts if you place high on some weekends. So all in all I achieved my goal on racing in the pros.

I don't race right now but I'm looking to get back into it as soon as I gain my endurance back.

-Stark

From The Beat: You need to be out of here and back on the bike. If you've raced professionally, you obviously have a lot of talent. What are your plans in the future for racing? And how has racing affected you as a man?

My biggest accident

Hey Beaters, this is Playboy once again.

I'm gonna talk about one accident in my life. My accident occurred with my ex-lady. It was Oct. 25, 2006. I got locked up since then I can't get my mind off her. I got her pregnant and she started stressing and having emotional thoughts and feelings. Then she lost the baby, because of me being locked. It was my fault she lost it, but an accident. I want to say sorry to her, but I can't, because I'm in here. So that's my accident.

To all, stay up.

-Playboy

From The Beat: Miscarriages are tragic accidents. One will never know what could have been. It takes a high level of maturity to take some responsibility for this event, but it's also important to realize that much of it was out of your control. Your lady clearly means a lot to you, so keep her close and make her a reason for getting and staying on the outs.

Chase

What makes me mad is the reason why I'm here. They got me in this unit for chasing a guy. Now all I can do is wait to go to trial. So that is what makes me mad.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Not to say what you did was or wasn't gang related, but for your information, in the government's effort to eradicate gangs, certain laws have gone too far and end up punishing those for whom the law was never meant. The root of the problem may be that the correctional system focuses on gangs rather than the reasons for why gangs even exist. Think about this for next week and let us know what you think.

Achievements

I achieve to try to get out of here. Maybe I'll come out on Monday Feb 11. I'll tell what happened.

I was going to Maydolnos to get my girlfriend's mom some food. The people that went were me and my girlfriend's brother.

When we got out of Maydolnos I was driving and there was a guy in the parking lot and my girlfriend's brother told me to stop. He shot him and I was scared. But the gun was plastic, it was a plastic bb and he shot him in the forehead. And when I went home the cops came to the house. And took him. And I came here.

I'm going home on Monday. And my girlfriend is going to have a baby. I'm going to be a dad. So that's my achievement, to go home with my girlfriend.

-Kevin

From The Beat: The real achievement would be going home and staying home, right? Now that you're going to be a father you have an incredible responsibility for another human life. If you can't keep yourself out of trouble, Kevin, how are you fit to take care of somebody else's life?

Regret

I don't know what I've achieved this year, but I think it was being able to stay out as long as I did without getting' in trouble. Until a few days ago, I could have avoided by staying home with my lady but instead I went out and did it anyways which was stupid. I regret what I did and if I could go back in time I would change my action. I would have stayed home with my lady.

My only thing I have to say is I'm sorry for what I have done and I would rather be dead than incarcerated. To not be able to go to the refrigerator when you want to or to the bathroom or even to go outside and take a breath of fresh air, it sometimes makes me wonder if I'll ever be able to open the front door and walk along or kiss my girlfriend goodnight.

-Steve

From The Beat: You can't change the past, but you can do whatever you want with the future. How do you think you can stay out permanently when you get released? Is the thought of losing your girl enough?

Voting

I think everybody should get a chance to vote, because I don't like the rules they're having and I think if felons were able to vote the rules will probably be different and all the immigrants will probably have better jobs than working in the fields or making holes in the dirt.

Well that's all I got to say Beat.

I just hate seeing the Raza suffering in the sun, working their asses off to survive.

- Spider

From the Beat: Have you ever voted on anything before? If so, how does it feel to have your voice heard? On the flip side, who would it feel not being allowed to do something that many people consider a human right?

My Violent Step-Dad

When I was younger I always used to get abuse by my step-dad. He was a punk. He always used to hit us for no reason. By us, I mean my older brother and I. I remember one time he beat my brother so bad someone on the block called the cops. My step-dad hit my brother for finding out where a Christmas present was. That was the most stupid reason to hit a little kid. My brother was only ten if I remember right!

- Trey

From The Beat: He's sick! What your stepdad did was truly an outrage. But from these terrible situations, we can learn positive lessons and the value of loving relationships where each person is respected. If you're still able to keep in touch with your brother, help each other to grow and succeed.

Accidents

What up Beat, this is the Homie from Santa Clara County. And I'm going to talk about accidents.

One accident that happened to me is being locked up. But you know what I did I did and I can't really care about what happens to me. I'm going to the Ranch and I hope to leave soon. So talk to you next time late.

Your homie

-C

From The Beat: You can't really care about what's already happened to you, but you sure can care about what is happening and what might happen in the future. Sure, not everything of life is in our control, but that doesn't mean we should just let go and let the winds take us wherever chance chooses. Take control, and be the captain of your future. When you leave and go to the ranch, and after you leave there, you will have choices to make. Think and think hard about making the right ones.

This One Accident

I have been in many accidents but I am only going to talk about one.

I was involved in a car accident. I was driving my girlfriend's car and was coming into Gilroy from Morgan Hill. I fell asleep on the wheel because I was awake since 6:00am and I had to drive home and I was tired. I crashed into an electricity pole on Monterey Road in Gilroy. I surprisingly walked out of the accident with internal bleeding and my ribs were bruised. The car was totaled and they had to replace the pole. Now I pray and thank God that I'm still alive.

- Larry

From The Beat: It's wonderful that you were able to overcome that accident, and now live to pray and thank God for your life. Now the question is what you'll do with this life that has been preserved. You've learned that life should not be taken for granted, so go after the good life, in a safe and successful way.

The car was totaled and they had to replace the pole. Now I pray and thank God that I'm still alive.

Time

Time goes by when you're locked up in a cell, time goes by and it's like you're in hell.

During this time you get told you're a piece of shhh, just not knowing any better than this.

Time goes by and you can't see your little brother. You maybe get one visit a week from your mother.

During this time you get to read a book, that's all you could really do when you're livin' the life of a crook.

During this time you think of doin' better, but you find out when you get out you just don't know anything better.

- Thinkin'

From The Beat: Are you sure you don't know anything better after getting out. Think about some of the good lessons you've learned recently, and look for places in your life to use them. And while you're in a hall, take advantage of your time. The good life doesn't have to start when you get out - you can reach for it now by making the right choices day by day.

Frustrating Accidents

I got in a car accident once. It wasn't that big of a deal, but the car didn't work afterwards. I got blamed for smoking weed. They wanted us to say who was at fault but nobody wanted to take the blame, so no one did. We all were blamed.

One time I went for a run and a cop saw me. He thought I was running from doing something so he chased me, pulled me over, and asked me if I was involved in a stabbing. They called a victim witness and I was cleared.

-Cleared

From The Beat: It must have been frustrating to be falsely accused, but you can avoid this situation by staying clear of activities and people that you know are trouble. If you hang with troublemakers, you can expect trouble.

What Uplifts Me

I go to my Mom, my Dad, and my girlfriend for hope. They give me things I need. Tell me things that bring me up when I'm feeling down. They turn my frown upside down. To me, these three people are all the love I need in life. Without their love, I don't know what I'd do. I know what I wouldn't have: I wouldn't have hope. They are my hope. I need them close to me. That's why sometimes it gets rough right here in the hall. They can't be close to me here.

-Brandon

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have such supportive people in your life. What more motivation do you need to change? What will it take to make wiser choices?

Accident While Intoxicated

Once upon a time in Watsonville, I was running from the cops for no reason. I was drunk and I started running around my apartments. At first I was kind of scared because I didn't know why he was chasing me. I was running so fast and I was so drunk that I didn't see the metal fence. It seemed to come out of nowhere. I fell so hard that it opened up my eyebrow and it started bleeding. That was my accident.

-Antonio

From The Beat: Getting drunk may seem like a fun thing to do, but you tell a story here that doesn't sound like fun. You were hurt and you got into trouble. This "accident" was not such an accident; it was due to your choice to drink. How would you feel if you accidentally hurt someone else? You can choose to prevent it.

What I Saw Today

Cruel voices floating in the wind.
A headless dog, eating carrion, whining.
Five fat Vikings opening their lockers.
A blind electrician replacing his fan belt.
Two ants carrying a refrigerator.
A square ball rolling down a hill.
Children eating rotten bananas.
Shoes worn on hands, pedaling a bike.

-Jackson

From The Beat: Jackson, you're about the only guy we know who could see so many wondrous, strange sights, and all in one day.

Math

Four plus nine equals twenty-five.
My world doesn't add up.

-Jackson

From The Beat: And you're good with numbers, too.

Bad Bike Accident

I enjoy riding bikes. Once I was jumping for the first time in a place near the post office in Aptos. I had completed a set of four jumps that I hadn't done before. I went to do them the second time and... oh, the third jump! The face was a little off and I was going too fast. When I came down, I was leaning way too far forward and I stacked on my face, breaking my collar bone in half.

After that, I tried to stand up but I couldn't. I needed three people to lift me up. I got a ride to the hospital. I remember sitting in the waiting room; pale and covered in dust from head to toe, for almost 45 minutes before they gave me a sling and sent me home.

-Ryan

From the Beat: Wow! Quite the experience! It sounds like you have things at home that you really enjoy doing... riding your bikes; being with your friends. Stay clean and you can enjoy those things again. Just try not to break anything next time.

What Gives Me Hope

My mom gives me hope in this world and that's the only person I trust. I love her to death and I will never harm her or turn my back on her.

-Dennis

From The Beat: We're sure that your mother misses you and wants you to be home with her. Is your love for her motivation enough to change your behavior, motivation enough to keep you out of juvy?



On Achievement

I have not achieved many things in my life. One thing I have achieved is ending up in juvy. I really hate it in here. Everyday I have to deal with the most immature kids I have ever met in my whole life. There is this one kid who just says the stupidest things I've ever heard. The one thing I like is the food. Until next time...

-Blaine

From The Beat: You're not the only guy who likes the food in Santa Cruz juvy. One of these days we're going to have to invite ourselves tsupper.

Fog

Everyone has a secret
meant for no ears.
We are a waste of space,
maxing our mom's tears.
You think you have true friends
until they are on the couch at home
and you are headed to the pen.
The fog is so thick
I can't see my future.

-Ryan

From The Beat: No fog around us today. We're seeing a future where a young man named Ryan is writing fine, thoughtful poems. Good work. We'd really love to see more.

Rememberance

I sit in the remorse of my decisions. I stare into the night sky to try and understand these acute angles for which I am to carry out my time. I know now I have hitched a ride on the correct bus.

See how the friends you know constantly have cigarettes protruding from their lips. I see this action as the silent scream for the soul to ask for help. Because I too have danced this dance of constant drama. I know nothing of those ways of life that are as soft as cotton.

Now most likely, you are all sitting in your six by nine cells trying to maintain your shape, wishing to be in your backyard.

Here is a helpful note: do the right thing. Choose your battles wisely and try to keep the doors to your future open.

Peace!

-Reagan

From The Beat: Yes, that is a helpful note, and one we hope you will apply to your own life. You're a good writer. We hope you're a good reader, too. Most writers write a lot and are voracious readers. Do you own a dictionary? A good dictionary is a writer's best friend.

On Accidents

I don't think that being at the hall right now is an accident. What got me here was a choice that I made outside. I've seen accidents. My friend didn't have anything to do with what I did on the outs but he's still going to have some charges for being involved with the rest of us.

-Isaias

From The Beat: You are wise to admit to the wrong choices you have made. Now that you are aware of them, you can change those choices and not make the same mistakes. It sounds like you have some apologies to make. You also see now how your wrong choices affect other people.

What Outrages You?

Albert: The law. They don't like us because we're criminals.

The Beat: What would you do differently if you were part of the legal system?

Albert: I wouldn't lock people up. I'd get more counselors involved because my counselors have kept me out of the hall for a long time. They give good advice and take me on trips out of here.

The Beat: Would you keep your promises on your own if you weren't locked up?

Albert: Well, it is a lot harder on the outside because of peer pressure and drugs. It's good in a way to be here and away from all of that.

-Albert

From The Beat: It sounds like you have recognized the real problem: peer pressure and drugs. You're protected from them while being locked up. But what will happen when you're back on the outs? It takes a lot of strength to say no to your friends. And we hear that you're a strong fellow, a good athlete. But remember - your life isn't a game. You don't get to play it over and over. This is it, and if you want it to be better than it's been, you must make better choices.

I Spit My Name

I'm lurkin' in the fed Cadillac.
I might go sell a dub sack.
They call me psycho Zack
I think about the days
I sold crack.
But now I'm just a mac.
I spit my name, Zack.

-Baby Boy

From The Beat: Zack - we cut your piece, and would have cut the whole thing, given this is a fantasy we don't want to encourage. Drop the tough guy mask. You are an intelligent fellow with a problem. You can begin to solve it by quitting the games. It will take a lot of honesty and a lot of strength to face and conquer your problem. We know you can do it. You've got the tools. Do you have the sense of purpose you'll need to go with that big brain of yours? We think the answer is "yes". That's what we want to believe. Prove us right, for your sake.

Accident While High

I was a young teen at the time and I lived in Aptos. I was getting into bad things with my life. I mean that I started getting into drugs. I was very young when I took my first hit. I was at my homie's house. I did the same thing as he did. It was so stupid, it was funny. I hit his fish tank because I thought his fish were going to attack me. My friend got mad and told me to go home. So I walked home, accidentally walked into the street and almost got hit by a car.

-Juan

From The Beat: We bet there have been plenty of "accidents" you almost got into when you were high. You're probably lucky to be walking around. It's hard enough to avoid accidents when we have all our wits about us. Why tempt fate, Juan. Life is better without the drugs. Do you have a serious problem? If so, have you sought help? Help is available ... for those who ask.

Car Accident

A couple of years ago, I had a car accident. It really hurt my back. I don't want that to happen again. I was around 10 years old, going to the store with my Dad and sister. We were at a red light when all of a sudden a car hit us. She thought it was a green light, so her car impacted us from behind. We didn't expect it; we were surprised. We pulled over, called the cops and then left after a while.

-Hoysis

From The Beat: We're glad that no one was hurt seriously. This is a good example of how not being aware of other people, and not paying attention to our actions, can cause harm.



The Hurt, The Guilt

Yeeeee, what's good, Beat? You know who this is—Queen Bee! Back for the fifth time. Stupid lil' shhh I do to get caught up. This time I wasn't alone, I brought someone with me. It was a boy (not my boyfriend, but one I wish could be.)

It all happened when I snuck out to go perk. He was there looking so cute. He picked me and ma gurl up downstairs in the parking lot. We went to the park and hella people was there—basically all my brother's friends. I wanted to perk, so I wasn't tripping who was there.

That boy was pretty quiet at first, but he opened up. We snuck outta the crowd and went for a walk. It was kinda awkward, 'cause we was both really quiet, but I broke the silence. We pretended to be lost in the forest. When my brother called his phone, he said everybody was going to leave us (me and that boy.) We just ignored him and turned off the phone. We weren't really lost in the forest, we were just up the hill, talking. Time passed by and five hours went by. It was two in the morning. I decided to spend the night at his place.

A week went by and I fell in love. To be continued...

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Since you write you've been in juvy five times, what are you doing to your own life? Freedom? Education? Family? Future? You share the night you met your new boy friend, or not, but what do we learn from this? We wonder if you were safe that night? You do not sound smart as to how you handled that situation to us. How do your parents feel about you spending the night away from home? Would you want your child to live the life you are leading some day?

What Gives You Hope?

Well, to be honest, I give myself hope. That may sound kind of strange or conceited or arrogant, but when I say that I give myself hope, I mean that I believe in myself.

Instead of trying to find security in someone or something else, instead I look within myself. When you try to fall back onto either someone or something that is "external," you can be disappointed. But if you look within yourself, if you trust in yourself, you'll never be let down. You can always count on yourself if you're true to yourself. That's real.

-Brasil

From The Beat: You've already learned a lot for your young age. It can be shocking for a young person when s/he realizes that someday s/he'll have to totally take care for and be responsible for her/himself. What about life, itself, gives you hope? What intrigues you? What do you want to learn/accomplish? What are your dreams for your life?

Outrage

Outrage is a big word and strong, too
Means a lot to me

I get outraged when people talk shhh
And don't front it

It outrages me when I get blamed for other people's BS
It outrages me that my mom protects her boyfriend, but
not me

It outrages me that my dad just walked away
It outrages me when my PO shows up to school
Because I know that means "back to the halls"
And that outrages me

-Chepe

From The Beat: We can feel how much you hurt. Can you still talk to your dad, hang with him, even though he doesn't live with you? Have you told your mom you don't think it's fair that she's more loyal to her boyfriend than she is to you? Maybe she should defend whoever she thinks is right in each situation, sometimes her boyfriend, sometimes you. If your PO shows up at school to get you, who is that on? Does your own behavior ever sabotage and outrage you?

Get Real Outrages

Listen up! I got somethin' to say. The Beat Within is totally gay. You write stupid things for an hour and then someone types them up. All they say is the same thing—"I'm locked up," "the food sucks," "I miss my girl" or "guy." They are really saying that just so people don't really know that they can't get nothing, because all they do is drugs and steal shhh, so that just proves it! They say they're sorry, but they really ain't. All they want is to think they have learned a lesson, but I know they really haven't. They just want out!

Another thing is, "I've been harassed by cops for no reason." THE REASON IS YOU CAN'T GET REAL. YOU STEAL AND DRINK AND DO DRUGS AND KILL, but that's not it.

I've been abused by a cop. I was tased and all I did was have weed. Cops are not that stupid to lose their jobs. They only tase if you run or fight. So get a life. Stop wasting everyone's time. That's for the inmates that do the same shhh 200 times.

I know I'm not perfect, but at least I try and I don't blame others for my crimes. I know I need to do better and I know that I can, so everyone who writes that shhh can sit and rot in a jail cell. So stop wasting time, 'cause you will be caught whether it's ten minutes or 100 years, you will be caught, so unless you want to rot in prison, stop stealing shhh and doing drugs and killing people, even if they deserve it.

And The Beat Within should stop promoting that shhh. Start a publication that teaches to read and write real English, not slang.

-Cowardly Lion

From The Beat: If someone in juvy with you writes that he was tased by a policeman, we at The Beat and you probably don't know really if what he wrote was true, but it may be, so, actually, who can judge? Why did the policeman tase you? Did you run or try to fight him? Why don't you write an essay for The Beat that describes your experience with police—whether they were fair to you or not? And/or write an essay about a time when you messed up and took responsibility for it? What exactly, do you think The Beat is promoting that you don't approve of? Please never feel pressured to write us. We don't need your thoughts if you are this arrogant. We try to replicate the spirit and the language of whatever each young person writes in juvy for The Beat, the way they specifically want to express it, without judging whether it is or should be written in street talk, slang, or proper English.

Probation Don't Help

The halls is boring, like the library

And it seems like I dug myself deeper than a quarry
This is bullshhh, probation officer tryna run yo' life and
be yo' stepdaddy

The schoolhouse playin' me. I ain't gone never go back
to a normal high school

They must think I'm a fool, but I'm not. I know what
they tryin to do. I ain't dumb

I thought probation was to help you, but I thought wrong
All probation done for me is get me in trouble—that's on
mamma's bro

I can't even go on vacation, 'cause probation
But it's nothin'. I ain't lettin' them take me down,
though

I'm so tired of this shhh, everyday ya boy wakin' up,
stressin'

But I'm gonna end this on a good note
Whoever understands what good, I just sayin', "Keep ya
head up!"

-Youngsta

From The Beat: What do you think probation is trying to do to you? No, what did you do to get put on probation? Why can't/won't you go back to a "normal" high school? So even though it must be maddening to have your PO controlling your life on the outs for awhile, at least you'll be almost free, and earning your total freedom will be up to you.

What Outrages Me

Today the people from placement came to pick me up. They were supposed to pick me up yesterday. Anyways, I changed into my regular clothes and I was hella happy.

I have only been in here four months, but I was hella happy. Right when I was about to walk out, they tell me to wait. The stupid lady that came to pick me up got mad because she didn't want to take five minutes to go to the pharmacy and get me my meds, so she just left and left me here. I got hella mad and had to change back to the clothes from the halls.

At first no placements wanted to accept me, now this. I was only out four days before I got locked up the second time, which is right now. So, basically, I've been locked up for five months.

Today is Valentine's Day and being rejected from placement felt like being rejected by a lady. I'm still mad as I write this.

-The Real Sneaky

From The Beat: Does this lady from placement leaving you in juvy mean that you're now rejected by that placement? Or does she or someone else from that placement have to drive back to pick you up? It sounds like you have no control over getting your meds together in order to leave for placement, so why don't you call or write the placement supervisor and explain what happened? No wonder you're mad.

Drugs Will Blur Your Life

Life is too short

So live while you can

Don't do drugs, 'cause yo' life will blur

Next thing you know, you tawkin' wit' a slur

Your brain won't work

Even if you only perk

If you like holes in your brain

Then keep poppin' them thangs

If you want sinus problems

Cluck it—do cocaine

Get addicted and you'll never be the same

Go ahead, try some crack

Then just to get it, you'll find yourself on the track

You don't wanna life like that—it's whack

Just writing this, I get flashbacks

And it's a disgrace

The way I dressed and my dirty face

So I think I'm gonna be sober just for today

And tomorrow I'll do the same

Don't sleep

-Alok

From The Beat: Nice poem! And wise! Why don't you write a serious essay for The Beat about what drugs caused you to do that now you think is wack, how you over came them, and what you're going to do or not do when you're free again to stay away from them? You have a lot to teach your Beat readers who are facing what you've already been through, so can you help them out with some of the wisdom you've learned?

What Outrages Me

I hate sittin' in my room. I feel like I'm a caged animal and no matter what I do or how hard I try, I can't get out. No cigarettes, no family, no nothing, and the worst part is I'm in here for something I didn't do. That's why you fight. That's why you hate.

-The One

From The Beat: The worst part of being in juvy must be feeling like you're trapped like an animal, and, really, you are. Why don't you describe exactly what it feels like to become an animal, locked up, and basically at the mercy of the authorities who run the system? Put in your fears, humiliations, loneliness, hate, whatever goes on in your heart, your imagination, while you're in juvy. So what will it take to get out and stay out?

G Is For Gold

G is for gold, my valued possession

G is for gorgeous facial expression

G is for a great teacher who taught me a lesson

G is for gigantic is how our love is stretching

G is for "Go 'head!"

G is for grievancy lead

G is for growing red dreads

G is for "Go, baby, to bed"

F is for "forget" that

F is for "forget" this and that

F is for "forget" that! I'm a mac

F is for "forget" you, 'cause I'm black

F is for "forget \$1; I need a rack

F is for famous

F is for flossy

F is for "forget" that beezy bossy

F is for freezing, 'cause my chain frosty

F is for forgetful, on how you lost me

-Mainey

From The Beat: You suggest a lot of things that must be on your mind in this poem, any of which you could really expand upon? What about how that person who was forgetful lost you? That does happen, especially when you're young and your life is careening so fast, it can go out of control and people who aren't around, maybe because they're stuck in juvy, get let behind. It's sad, even tragic, when anybody loses someone s/he loves for any reason, but especially so, when it's because that person is so plummeting downhill so fast that s/he is losing him/herself.

*I was only out four
days before I got locked
up the second time...*

You Can't Hear My Heart

So far apart

You can't hear my heart

And I can't hear yours

Your lips so warm

You hug so sweet

The fire between us

Builds up heat

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: We hope he'll influence you to stay cool and free, when you're out again!

Under The Influence

I was in a mini van. I was driving in Fillmore in San Francisco. I was driving drunk and high. The night before, I got no sleep. While I was driving, I could barely see anything. Every stoplight I had my eyes closed. It was on green. My friends say I go, but I didn't go 'til the third time they said it. I keep driving. I went downhill. The sofa in the back came up. I could not step on the brake and crashed into a car, then I got out and ran.

-Trevel

From The Beat: What a mess! Careless too. Of course you do not have a driver's license, right? So did you get caught? Is that why you're in juvy now? Did your friends, you, or anyone in the car you hit get hurt? How grateful are you in your heart that nobody, including you, died because of you? What lessons did you learn?

A Cop Tased Me

One time, when I was nine, I went to the store and the dude I was with stole some Kool Aid and they got him on camera. We was walking down the street and the cop had pulled up on the curb and told us to put our hands in the air and not to move. Instead of putting my hands in the air, I put my hands in my pockets to get my receipt because he accused us of shoplifting. My friend broke on me, and then the cop tased me. It was like that—tat tat tat tat. He shocked me and I shook, I fell, and he took me home and I can't remember anything else. He thought I was going to shoot him.

Then I was on the Queen's Highway. The cop took me home and he said he was sorry, I guess, "cause I thought I shocked you." My friends were all laughing at me. This happened in Miami over the summer, three years ago. I felt discriminated because he was a white cop.

-Eli

From The Beat: It must have been hugely scary and painful to be tased by a policeman, especially when you were so young. Why were your friends laughing at you? How did your parents react? Were you and your friend who stole the Kool aid, then split, still friends after that?

My Music Gives Me Hope

I don't really know what gives me hope. My music gives me hope, I guess. Whenever I get angry or upset, and just want to give up, just the beat of the music, the rhythm, calms me down and gives me power to not give up, I guess.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Music is so powerful. It carries a lot of strength. It can uplift us and it can also make us sad.

Why?

Why is she so stupid?
Why would she put a letter by her shoe?
They say it's my fault
But she the one that got caught
She hella dumb for putting it by her shoe
Why is she not smart?
Why she try and act like a bop?
Why? Why? Why?
Ma, ma, ma my beezie
It's over
Unless you get smarter

-Jade

From The Beat: It sounds like you were the one who wrote this young lady the letter she put by her shoe, right? Whether you were in school, in juvy, wherever, if sending or handing her a letter was against the rules, then doesn't that make you just as not smart as you say she was? Why not take responsibility for your roll in this mess? She might respect and even like you for it.

My Girl Will Be Waiting For Me

I'm disappointed that I'm not getting out today. I wanted to get out and do something special for Valentine's Day with my girl, but is all good. I'll do my time like nothing, get out, and get back to the block, and I know she'll be waiting for me.

-Yosepi

From The Beat: What you write may be real, but is going straight back to the block really a good idea? Does hanging on the block enhance or sabotage your life, or both? Are you in juvy right now because of the streets? What does the block do for your girlfriend? Do you two have any lives beyond the block?

NEW MEXICO

My Sister Gives Me Hope

What gives me hope is my sister, she helps me a lot and she's been there for me when my mother wasn't.

Like now my mom just up and left, sometimes I feel like why she had me if she wasn't going to take care of me.

It's like my sister is my mom, and I love her, but I love my mom. I just don't understand why she abandon me, and now only my sister visits me here in the D-home. My sister is the one that keeps my head up, and makes me feel good so that is what gives me hope.

- Rastice

From The Beat: First it's good to know that your sister has stepped up to help you out in any way she can, but it is to bad that your mother has "abandon" you this way. Know one thing, what your mother has done is not your fault. It is your mother that has to work through the issues she is going through. Keep your head up you will get through this.

Outside Support

What gives me hope is when my family answers my calls. They make me feel like they'll pick me up when ever I fall. When I get mad because I'm in a bad situation they tell me to calm down, and I got to be patient.

The only thing that keeps me stable and motivated is their words and their voices. They give me advice on what I should do so I could pick the right choice. They keep me informed on what's really going on, looking after my son since his daddy's not at home. I think you and appreciate all that you do for me.

To my family I love you all whether I'm in jail or on the streets. Much love.

- Reggie

From The Beat: It is good that you recognize your family for everything they do for you. Now its time to step up to the plate and stay out of jail this way you can appreciate them even more.

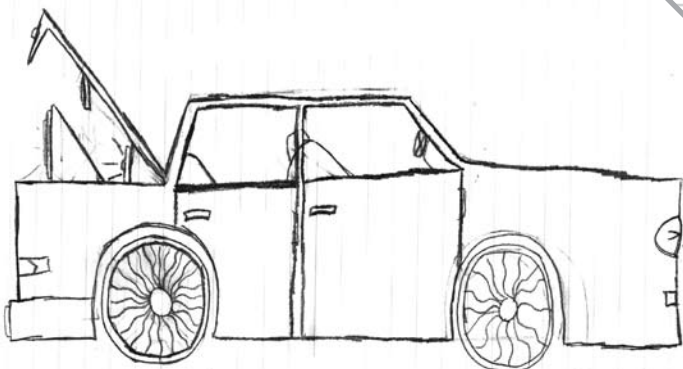
God Gives Me Hope

What gives me hope is, God, when shhh gets hard I pray. I try to go to church as much as possible, and also my daughter she gives me more hope then anything else. When it seems like I don't have anything, at least I still got her, and even when shhh get hard I know I have to do for her.

It don't really give me hope, but I like to listen to music it calms me down.

- Kalee

From The Beat: Remember you can't just turn to "God" when life gets tough, do it all the time. If you don't change your ways and stay out of jail, you may find yourself fighting to keep custody of your daughter. Don't give the state that chance; change your ways now before it is too late for you and your child.



Cuando Venía Para Acá

Cuando venía de Honduras para acá, me asaltaron en Guatemala. Despues cuando cruce Mexico, camine por unos días y sufri mucho porque aveces aguantaba hambre, frío, sed y además de eso me arriesgue en el tren que me cortara una parte del cuerpo.

Yo vine a este pais a superar y tengo la fe en Dios y la Virguencita que yo confío en ellos. Yo sé que Dios me va ayudar y ojalá que me esuche.

From The Beat: Ojalá te escuche y te de esa oportunidad. ¿Crees que te la merezcas? ¿Crees que esta vez aprovecharas la oportunidad si te la dan? ¿Estas seguro?

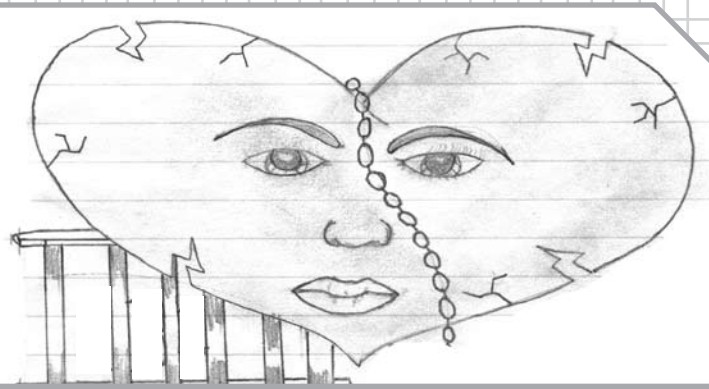
When I Was On My Way Here

When I was coming from Honduras, they robbed me in Guatemala. When I was crossing Mexico, I walked for a few days and I suffered so much because I had to deal with hunger, coldness, and risking to loose a part of my body when getting on a train.

I came to this country to succeed and I have faith in God and the Virgin that they are going to help me. I know God will listen to me and I hope He does.

-Denis, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope He listens and give you that chance. Do you deserve it though? Will you take advantage of it if it was given to you? Are you sure?



Hacia Los Estados Unidos

Mi historia del recorrido hacia los Estados Unidos. Sali de mi casa buscando otra mejor vida. Lo que les quiero contar es que pase un camino bien difícil aguantando sed de agua, frío, hambre etc.

Gracias a Dios ya estoy aqui en los Estados Unidos y quisiera ayudarle a mi familia en lo principal. También quisiera prosperar en hacer mi casa y ayudar a mi hijo.

From The Beat: Tanto que sufristes para caer a este lugar. ¿Te arrepientes haber tirado todo por un dinero facil que provino de gente lastimada por las drogas? Recuerda que todo se paga en la vida. Todo los actos traen consecuencias. Recuerdalo siempre!

Towards United States

This is the story about my journey to the U.S. I left my house looking for a better life. What I want to share with you is that I suffered from thirst, cold, and hunger, etc.

Thank God I am here in the U.S and I want to help my family in their principals needs. I want to succeed in building a house and helping my son out.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: You suffered so much to end up in this place. Do you regret losing it all for easy money that was taken from people who are addicted to drugs? Remember that everything is payable in life. Every action has its consequences. Always remember that!

Luchando Por La Vida

Hey, what's cracking Beat! Soy Snoopy otra vez, escribiendo para ustedes. Ahora les voy a escribir de que si vale la pena luchar por mi vida. La verdad es que aveces no tengo ganas de luchar o seguir adelante. Por eso nadie viene a visitarme y aveces creo que se han olvidado de mí.

Mi corazón y Dios me dice que siga adelante, que me pare, trate de salir lo más rápido posible de aqui. Yo siento que mi vida se merece una oportunidad. Es la primera vez que me encierran y quisiera una segunda oportunidad. Yo lucho y me paro pensando que voy a salir adelante de aqui. Lucho con mi vida para volver a la escuela, tratar de ser alguien en la vida y poder ver a mi novia por última vez.

Me acuerdo cuando hablo con mi novia y me dice que siga adelante que me va a esperar. Me dice que no le importa lo que ella espere y que me esperará. Eso dice ella eso me dan ganas de salir adelante.

From The Beat: Estamos seguro que tendras esa segunda oportunidad. No estaras ahí toda tu vida. ¿Si te llegan a dar esa segunda oportunidad, crees que seras alguien diferente? Tienes que estar seguro de lo que realmente quieres. Aqui hay muchos que han dicho lo mismo, y despues de la primera vez han venido aqui varias veces. No permitas que eso te pase a ti. Lucha por tu vida y sé una persona de bien. Se nota atravez de tu escrituras que no perteneces a estos lugares. Busca los lugares donde deberias de estar. Suerte!

Foghting for Life

Hey What's cracking Beat! I'm Snoopy once again just writing for you. I'm going to write about if it's worth fighting for my life. The truth is that sometimes I don't have the motivations to fight to succeed. That's why I don't get any visits and that makes me feel as if they have forgotten me.

My heart and God tells me to succeed, to get up, and to try to get out of here as soon as possible. I think my life deserve another chance. This is my first time locked up and I would like a second chance. I fight and I get up thinking that I will succeed out of here. I fight for my life to come back home, to try to be somebody in life and be able to see my girl again.

I remember when I talk to my girl and she tells me to move on and that she'll wait for me. She tells me that it doesn't matter how long she'll way, and she'll just wait for me. This is what she says which give me strength to move on.

-Edgar, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sure that you will get that second chance. You won't be there your whole life. If you get that second chance, would you be someone different? You have to be sure of what you really need. In here, there are many who have said the exact words you have, and they have come here many times after their first time. Don't le this happen to you. Fight for your life and be a good person. Throughout your writing, we can notice that you don't belong here. Find the places where you really belong. Good luck!

Mi Madre

Tengo sentimientos hacia mi madre. Me siento feliz con mi madre porque me quiere y me da alimento en mi vida. Ella me quiere y me da vida.

Yo voy a ayudarla en la casa con mi hermano. También ayudarla conmigo mismo. Voy a regresar a la escuela porque me gusta mucho.

From The Beat: ¿Y tú que le das por todo lo que ella te da?

My Mother

I have good feelings toward my mother. I feel happy with her because she loves me and feed me with food.

I'm going to help her at home and my brother too. I also want to help myself for her. I'm going back home because I like it.

-Sebastian, San Francisco

From The Beat: And what are you giving back to her for all she has done to you?

Saturday

I was in a deep sleep on my bed
 Awakened by the lights
 "Five minutes 'til breakfast"
 Is heard through the mike
 So I quickly get up, brush my teeth and wash my face
 Time to line up, square it on my door

Silent walk to central dining
 Everybody still half asleep
 I'm steady looking around
 Watchin' if someone's tryna creep
 Same old nasty food
 This shhh never gets good
 I don't expect it to
 Just sometimes I think it should
 After eating, it's back to my cell
 Nothing to do but to kill time
 So I straighten up my room, ready to clean it
 Waiting for the same mop bucket
 That everyone uses to come to my room
 Awaiting so I must work out
 I bust down with a series of modified burpies
 Pounding up down my chest
 As I come up or go down

Set after set, trying to program
 And get in the best shape I can
 After about 1 1/2 hours of working out
 My door is propped open for me to clean my room
 Change my sheets, blanket and robe
 Exchange my hygiene, get everything I need
 And clean anything else that needs cleaning before I mop

I finish mopping, time to close my door
 Sit down on my desk, write a letter
 Draw something
 Tryna kill time 'til the floor dries
 Make my bed
 Now it's time for lunch... as I sit and eat,
 I look around, absorb my surroundings, as anger builds
 up in my head
 I feel my tension in my jaw and my forehead
 Wondering why people around me, most of them laughing,
 smiling
 Having a good ol' time
 Maybe I've been here too long
 Can't hardly seem to crack a joke
 Even when I'm out, I'm always angry for no specific reason
 Mad at everybody, mad at the world!

So after lunch, it's back to my room
 Again I bust down, take a masa
 And wait to see if we're going to come out for LMA
 If not, just work out in my room,

Get my pack and get ready for showers,
 Wait until my door buzzes open to shower
 Come back to my room,
 Get dressed, do my hygiene and wait for dinner
 Conversate with me cellie, talkin' 'bout some bullshhh
 Nothin' productive

Time for dinner
 Time to collect what people owe me
 Staff tryna console me
 But ain't nada getting through to this vato's head
 In one ear and out the other
 I don't see why they bother with me any more
 I ain't going to change or care

After dinner, in my room
 I try to take a lil' nap, wake up
 Then, finally I'm out my room
 To kick it and chill with my Raza and the homies
 I got two hours of rec time, always get cut short
 We get an hour if we lucky
 Staff always tryna play us
 Lazy as hell

Soon enough I'm back in my room
 Bust down with my roommate
 It's my work, to work out
 Don't stop 'til they turn off the lights
 And I can't go any more
 Cross out another day off the calendar
 Lay on my bed, but I can't go to sleep

Could be out with my homeboys or some females
 But instead I'm locked down in a cell
 I toss and turn at night
 Demons attack me in my sleep, hearing people cry
 Wondering things, just asking, "Why?"
 I've been given many answers, answers that create more
 questions
 So much I got in my head,
 Wondering why I'm not dead
 I'm never awake
 Just stuck in this nightmare
 I, myself, have created

-Speedy Vicious

From The Beat: We can't begin to tell you how powerful your words are, how deeply they must affect anyone who reads them — and how deeply the reality of what you describe is affecting you. Asking questions that create more questions is the essence of philosophy, of science, of art. The Greek philosopher Socrates wrote (2500 years ago), "The unexamined life is not worth living..." (just before he died in prison). Two of your questions jump out at us, and we think they are worthy of your great mind. The first is, why the counselors (or anyone) even bothers to talk to you since you "aren't going to change." (Oh, how powerfully we disagree with that conclusion!) The second is why you're still alive. Why do we bother with you? Do we see something that you cannot? Why are you still alive? Does God see something that you cannot? You may be stuck in a nightmare of your own creation, but — like an old vinyl record that sticks on a scratched groove — your life can be jarred past that sticking point and begin again its forward motion to fulfill a destiny far greater than you now believe possible.

*I'm never awake
 Just stuck in this nightmare
 I, myself, have created*

PIECES • OF • THE • WEEK

A New Beginning

It's now the 8th
And time is going slower
Towards my change in fate
And leave part of my life in closure
This experience has taught me much
About decisions, education and jobs
What I need to appreciate
Like my girlfriend's touch
Now I shall join the endless mobs
Of people always moving, running about
Focusing on everything
Living in doubt
A world of making, faking and shaking
The boat (so to speak)
A life of evil and good
Such a big feat
To do as one should
Here I go into guessing
Uncertainly, of course
And nothing short of death
Will make me fall short
Of the standards I set
For myself

-Sky

From The Beat: We're embarrassed trying to rhyme/Cause you're better at it, time after time/But we know a few things about "living in doubt"/Which could be described as freedom's shout/Keep moving with open mind and open heart/Treasure the gifts that set you apart/Those "standards" you've set make you a seeker/Transforming boy into man, student into teacher

I Was Dead But Now Reborn

I told my mom I was sorry for the very first time
She was speechless for a moment, and then started to cry
For the first time in my life I felt really good about myself
No more drugs
If I continue this mess, then I go back to the place
I was in "hell"
My mom told me she loved me
And then, at that moment, now I can see
Good things running through the back of my mind in just one blink
I told her I loved her, too
Everything I was saying to her was true
I told her, "Everything is going to be all right"
She was so happy, and then continued to cry
She was so happy and told me that I had changed
I told her, "I did change, and I am not ashamed"
She said, when I get out, she's going to push me
Until my life turns around
I was so happy, but my mom's proud
The last words I told her, were
"Mom, I always thought I was dead to everybody
But now I know it's a new beginning of time
For I am now reborn and the start of a new life"

-Lil' Laylow

From The Beat: We are trying to reconcile the two "Lil' Laylow"s we find in today's Beat. The first can think of nothing but hitting the bottle, poppin' the pill, smokin' the chop, and that Lil' Laylow can only disappoint the Lil' Laylow that is revealed in the is wonderful expression of rebirth! Don't disappoint your mother. But even more important, don't disappoint yourself. They say that "today is the first day of the rest of your life." We hope you prove this to be true.

Foolishness

Like beads of rain
On my widow pane
These tears of shame
Are still the same
Nothing I can do
Will make it up to you
You have no clue
But I'm saying it anew
I hurt you bad
It makes me sad
As far as you know
No clouds can show
I don't want to be the rain
That flows through the drain
I'm sorry for what I did
I was being such a kid
That will never make it right
But I'm bringing it to sight
Know that I love you
Trying to pay my due
I can't ever tell
I'll take it to hell!
The knowledge would hurt
The delivery so curt
It would break you down
That I can't allow...
Now I tell a lie
Hope it won't show in my eyes
"I've never cheated on you"
Am I a fool?
Yes!
To be blessed
With someone who loves
Like sweet morning doves
Your whisper in my ear
Calms my inner fear
Maybe I tried to destroy it
Throwing a fit, trying to dispose it
Being the one on the other side
Like a pesticide
To eat away the good
Something I should
And will never do again
Forgive me, I'm a guy
Susceptible (yet, less so now) to my
Inner desires

-Sky

From The Beat: We have already told you many times that you possess a rare set of obvious skill with words and self-expression combined with a heart brimming with humanity and humility. Such gifts cannot be overstated. We cannot tell you what is the right thing to do in relation to this transgression against the girl you love. We know you will find the right thing to do in that great heart of yours. We also hope that you will maintain a relationship with The Beat Within long after you have left this place and pursue your destiny. Your words always add grace to this publication, and that is something for which we will always be grateful to you.

*I told my mom I was sorry
for the very first time
She was speechless for a moment, and then
started to cry
For the first time in my life I felt really good
about myself*

*The truth of a gangsta is that
we hide what we most love.*

The Truth

To the judge, I'm a ward of the court
To my dad, I'm his son
To my mom, I'm nothing
To my lil' brother, I'm a gangbanger
To my girl, I'm her love
To my lawyer, I'm a guilty guy
To my teacher, I'm a mess up
To the 5/0, I'm a criminal

But on the real, I'm a human who's in love
On the real, every time you with your homeboys
You say that you don't care about your girl
That she's nothing to you but a game
But, homie, don't lie to yourself, you always have her on
your mind
And no matter what, you're always thinking of her all
the time
Saying the truth is not easy, being locked up is not a
game
Homeboys, I know you feel the same

Now I'm here in my room waiting to get transferred to
a group home. You tell everyone that it's nothing. Deep
inside, you don't mean it. Every time you in here, you
say you don't care about no one. But deep inside, you
are always thinking of the people you love. You tell your
homeboys you stopped smoking because you don't feel
the same. But on the real, you made a promise to your
girl that you was not going to smoke anymore because
you love her. But you're always trying to keep it on the
down low.

The truth of a gangsta is that we hide what we most love
Baby, you just an angel sent from above
Only God knows why he sent you my way
Ever since we met, you cared
No matter what, you been there
By why do ninjas hate?
Just because, baby
You chose me to be your date
Ninjas, it time for you to move on because you're late
The truth of a gangsta is that you love your girl with all
your heart
But you just don't show it because you think it shows
"weakness"
But, homie, keep it trill
Homie, just tell yourself that you love her and keep it
real
Now my girl is what everything is all about
Homie and Baby, I'm out

-Johnny

From The Beat: This is a fascinating exploration of love, combining prose and poetry in a wonderful way. What it seems to us that you're saying is that, despite all the different perceptions of people who see you from their own points of view, you are really just a boy in love with a girl, and that's the oldest story in history. One thing for sure, though, you are so right when you say it's late and time to move on. You're ready to leave the life that leads to lock-ups behind you, Johnny, and to focus on the real treasure in your life. It's late. It's time to move on. Well done!

Vicious Nightmare In My Sleep

I had a dream the other night. I dreamt that I went to prison. After doing a dozen plus years, I was paroled out. I was so excited to be released. I took the Greyhound home, enjoyed my bus ride. I could almost taste the freedom, so I made it home, settled in lightweight.

Was out for about a week. My dad was having a party for me at my house. He didn't tell anybody I was out. He wanted it to be a surprise. People started arriving.

I went unnoticed. Didn't think much of it at first, until my two aunts and grandma come through the door. As they walked in, my dad stood beside me. My aunt's face lit up and her arms swung open as to give a hug, approaching me, so I, too, opened my arms. She passed right past me to hug my dad. My second aunt followed to hug him, too, and looked at me as to say, "Who's that?"

It was as if the party stopped. Everyone was quiet and still, music off, all eyes on me. As my grandma stood in front of me, staring, observing me, then my dad spoke out, "You don't know who that is?" She thought and responded, shaking her head, "No!" "Freddy!" my dad said. "Freddy?" She thought, as people, my family began to whisper, trying to figure out who I was. My eyes closed shut as the teardrops fell down my face. I awakened and there they rolled down my cheeks, but it felt so real. I don't understand... I was forgotten, erased from their memory.

Many dreams like this I have. I know I should change, but ain't willing to make that decision. I'm addicted and unwilling. Vicious, ain't it?

-Speedy Vicious

From The Beat: As we told you when you wrote and read this piece aloud, it is a powerful message, a fear welling up deep inside you that, unless change comes, you are leaving behind the most precious gift of all, the love of family. The fact that you are wrestling with your addiction (to the "cause," to the streets, to the gang) and your love (of aunts, cousins, parents, freedom) tells us that something very important is going on in your brain, something which you cannot control. All we can do is hope that you do not allow this dream of you fading from memory to come true. Your dreams come straight out of your own brain, your own thinking. Listen carefully to what they are trying — what you are trying — to tell yourself!

World We Know

The world we know on the upper lucky side, where most of my people don't really know, there's riches, wealth, joy, peace, and pain.

The lower side, somewhere I'm pretty familiar with, is livin' in poverty, struggle, pain, joy and lust.

The differences I see are few, separated by environments is the only thing. We are all humans, both with negative and positive feeling. Both have our ups, both have our downs. The only difference is the side of town.

But why is the majority of the lower class people are us, of color? If we are all "equal" why are things the way they are?

-Speedy Vicious

From The Beat: In the cities of our very rich country, the majority of the poor are people of color — often living in conditions our government finds unacceptable when they exist in other countries. But you probably will be surprised to learn that most people on welfare, most people who get food stamps, are actually white people — also starved of education and preparation for the 21st Century, but living in the country's rural heartland and not in the cities. As long as races are pitted against each other, as long as the poor see other poor people (even of the same race) as "the enemy," the rich will continue to reap the rewards. The real question (to us) is how can this degree of poverty (and not just economic poverty, but poverty of spirit and hope) exist in the richest, most powerful country on earth? This should shame everyone who has ever saluted our flag with the words, "with liberty and justice for all."

Take Small Steps

When you get out of jail, you need to take small steps, as if you were walking up a river with a strong current. If you take too big of a step, you will get pushed down the river.

-Wang

From The Beat: This is a wonderful metaphor, and it's true whether you're just getting out of jail or not. They say that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step. What are the small steps you are planning to take to keep you moving upstream when you get out of here?

*Weakness is using pain
And inflicting pain to gain.*

Blind To What Matters

Who are the people
Acting so feeble?
And thinking they're better?
All the bullies, toadies, hurting for fun,
Something that shouldn't be applauded, but shunned.
Was something changed
For them to feign:
Strength? Power? Immortality?
Am I the only one
Who sees this as faulty?

These people see me,
(Maybe)
But what they perceive is wrong,
Only seeing outside;
This might be what makes them blind,
Blind to difference,
(Or sameness),
For we are all human...
That is not a weakness.
Weakness is using pain
And inflicting pain to gain.
That is a predator...
None knows better...

But me?
What should I complain
About being locked up? (shame)
But being in here is not me!
As soon as I'm out... I'm FREE!!

-Sky

From The Beat: Freedom cannot be bound by wall or fence/ It's a state of mind, the grace of sense/Some in here will never attain it/Some out there will never retain it/In you we see not what will be/But what is: you are already FREE!

A Bound Mind

A colorful glade
Fills your gaze,
And those lights around
That you've never found.
With music that sees
And color that flees
As each work in cooperation
Expanding your imagination.
If these seas
Of shades that bleed
Is something that
This world lacks,
Why not open your mind
To those ties that bind,
And lose them so completely
You at once become giddy?
Yes, it's absurd,
But don't be perturbed,
For your mind can sing
And look on the variety it can bring.

-Sky

From The Beat: Like viewing a bird with outstretched wings/ We love hearing what your heart sings!

Everywhere

You cannot look for Love,
For it is all round you...
To the fluttering wings of a dove,
To the church where you hear, "I do."
Yes, it is everywhere,
For everyone to share,
From lovers to friends,
To letters that one sends.
It's Valentine's Day
Come what may...
Are you in Love? Yes!?
I wish you the best!

-Sky

From The Beat: We are so used to the dark and depressing stories of life on the streets, that we sometimes forget to celebrate such profound miracles as love itself. Thank you for reminding us.

All A Matter Of Time

Stress is what drives me insane
Relief is something I look for
But I seem to never find!
Talking to my PO, hearing about my time
Drives me more crazy than I already am
Eight months for something that makes no sense
It's nothing, 'til my time comes to an end

-Scarface

From The Beat: Of course it's something, Scarface. How could "nothing" drive you insane? When you say you're here for something that makes "no sense," do you mean you don't know why you did what you did, or you don't know why the system responds the way it has? In either case, it's for you to find the "sense" or "no sense" — or to keep allowing yourself to be put in a cage under the control of strangers. To us, that is what makes no sense.

Let Him Out

You say that you see me, but the only thing you see is the outside of me. You see a guy with attitude, a guy that lives in a messed-up world, but you don't even know me. The real person is inside of my skin, that I'm trying to release, which I'm gonna do, just takes time. I realize that I need to let my real person out to show, so I can be known in life.

-Lil' Cyko

From The Beat: What you say is true of all of us, to one degree or another. If the "real" you is hidden behind a surface that allows the world to misjudge you, then it is time to let the real you show through.

Achievement

I am achieving myself because when I am at home and my teacher tells me to do something, I say, "No!" But when I came in juvenile school and they told me to do something, I said, "Okay," because I want to get out and go back home.

-Lil' Richie

From The Beat: What does it mean to "achieve yourself?" If you're only saying "okay" in here so that you can get back out there, what will you do when you're back in school on the outs? If you keep your old patterns and say "No," it won't be long 'til you're right back here, saying "okay." Okay?

*Yes, it's absurd,
But don't be perturbed,
For your mind can sing
And look on the variety
it can bring.*

I Want My Life Back

Being in Hillcrest has really changed my life and my view on a lot of things. I've only been here over a week, and it has been the roughest time of my life. I know I am obviously here for a reason and I am going to finish my time here, which will hopefully be until the 20th of this month.

Being here is really hard for me. I miss my friends and family so much. I cried the first four days. I've realized how much my grandma means to me, because she has raised me my whole life. Being away from her is so hard. I haven't been able to talk to any of my friends since I've been here, which I'm going to take home with me, and these things will make me a better person. I can't wait to go back home and have my life back.

-Sarah

From The Beat: The lessons you've learned (the hard way) should serve you for the rest of your life! We hope you never forget them, because if this time has been hard on you, just think how hard it has been on your grandma!

Hunting Then Hunted

Bidding,
Grinning,
Silently stalks,
The cat moves slowly in a light trot...
Closing in on the inevitable end,
A small growl has a message to send.
Towards its prey,
On its stomach it lays;
And in the moon, you see
The eyes that gleam;
Far more near
Than your tangible fear

-Sky

From The Beat: Since we cannot equal the elegance of this beauty, we have borrowed one stanza from a five-stanza poem called "Cat" we found on the internet by Australian poet David Smith White: "Come stalking, come stalking,/my vain and inviolate Cat./My immune and disdainful Cat!/In her predatory crimes,/(though she's fed all the time)/she's the terrorist trained as a diplomat!"

Thinking

If everyone could vote, would things be the same? I think not. Our country's ways of doing things, in my eyes, are not right — the law, politics, anything you can mention. But what I don't understand is where do we get government? Where and why do we have democracy? That was in Rome, but how did that come from Rome to the US? Why on the back of the dollar bill, spiritual, historical information is listed, listed in a way not so commonly understood, hidden in messages a naked eye cannot see? Things to wonder, things put together in my mind I try to understand, but it's like I'm in a maze, stuck and lost.

-Speedy Vicious

From The Beat: Your mind is seeking answers which are not to be found in movies or "popular belief." (Those "hidden" messages on the back of the dollar bill, for example, aren't really that hidden, if you study how the Founders of the country decided on those symbols.) Few people take the time to study how ideas and institutions have come down to us through many historical lines. But the information is all there, in books, and you have at least two qualities that make you a prime candidate to find the answers to your questions: A fine mind, and a powerful curiosity. It is so easy for us to see you in a major university (Stanford has just announced that it will waive tuition for anyone whose family makes less than \$100,000 a year!) studying history, philosophy, or really, anything else that your curious mind wants to explore. Our deep hope is that you, too, see yourself in such a setting.

A Bed I Just Borrow

Today my day was so hard.
I mean, let me begin by saying, Time —
It's going by so slow.
I can't take it no more.
I wonder if I'm going crazy.
I mean, I wake up to a room that ain't mine, to a pillow
that's a blanket.
It just makes me lazy.
I do my bed, but it's still not mine;
It's a bed that I just borrow while I watch the cars go by.
My window is the only thing that makes me happy.
When I'm bored, all I do is look outside,
Smile at the deers that pass me by.
Plus the cars,
But they're way too fast, so just wait to dark and watch
the stars.
Then, the next day comes, and here we go again...
Same ol', same ol' all over again.
I'm just tired of being here. I did the crime
And now I know how it feels to pay the time.

My mom is happy that I'm almost out. Can't wait no longer, I'm almost done. So change my life, or stay the same? If I change, I know I'm going to be so proud, but I'm going to miss the homegirls, just the same.

How 'bout the homies? Will they hate? I'm just so tired of the streets, all the drugs and the drink. I'm hoping a lot that I can change.

When I get out, it's going to be hard, but I know my choice, and it ain't no fun. But I can care less. It's my decision — stay with my family and go to school. Become a nurse. But still, from the 'hood, take care of my homies when they get shot 'cause you know me, I got you to the fullest.

That's my plan and I ain't going out. I'm finna prove it.

-Chichara

From The Beat: It's not just being locked up that's giving you that feeling of going crazy, Chichara, it's also the struggle you're having within yourself. In Shakespeare's most famous play, the title character, Hamlet, asks: "To be or not to be?" It is clear to us that you want "to be," but are afraid that such a choice somehow betrays your homies. We believe that if you follow your true dream, you can become a great nurse, and serve both yourself and your homies.

Time

What's good with The Beat? It's your boy, Money Hungry, here, just writing about time. Your boy wasted too much time in this life. Whether it was time here in the halls or time doing stupid shhh, I wasted too much time.

Moms is always on my line. I can't take this shhh no mo'. Plus, I'm finna be turning eighteen real quick. I think that I wasted the most time puffin' on blunts, sittin' on the couch, hella lazy, playin' Madden. I also wasted hella time committin' crimes on the block, and I be stressin', 'cause of the karma that's finna catch up with me.

I didn't spend enough time with the fam bam. God, I miss them so much. Man, I wasted too much time on the grind, for real, for real.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Regret for past misdeeds is only useful if it has the power to change future behavior. We hope you will remember what you are feeling now once you are back out there and able to make your own choices again. When there is nothing to tempt you, it is easy to make promises not to waste any more time; but when those temptations come your way, it requires courage and determination to pass, to keep your eyes on the prize, and to be the man we know you are capable of becoming.

Juvenile Hall

I been in and out of jail for a long time, doing some time, nothing big. As I keep coming in, I started to do more time. I went to Camp Glenwood, did eight months. I keep messing up!

On one day I was hellra drunk, got arrested. I woke up in my cell. My PO told me that I had ten new charges and that I was going to CYA, but I got lucky. Now I am doing eighteen months.

-Dopey

From The Beat: You have had lots of time to think about why you keep sabotaging your freedom. Have you come up with any answers? Doing time in the hall is no picnic, but it's like a picnic when compared with what lies ahead, unless you get your act together. What are your plans in that department?

First Love

There was a girl once
Who made me feel great.
All the stories she had
And the things she said
Were so profound...
I knew that I loved her,
I was speechless, too.
She read my poems,
Liked what I wrote.
But I couldn't express
The feelings I felt...
She became flustered
Because I had nothing to say.
But she was my first love,
I was nervous all day.
Eventually she said
That we were through.
The anger I knew:
My heart was hurt
But, yet, again, as you'd expect,
The feelings I felt, I could not express.

-Sky

From The Beat: To be honest, it is difficult for us to imagine you unable to express what you feel. Maybe the poet that you clearly are was still waiting to be born...

Bittersweet? Maybe Not...

Death, it seems,
Is an inevitable end.
As true as this is,
Life's still worth living.
Maybe it's all the sweeter
When we realize how soon
Something we love
Might easily be consumed
By this uncertain wonder.
A door we cannot cross
'Til it's our time to go...
A new experience, maybe...
It cannot be through.
I believe there is something,
But I don't know what.
Fear should be the last thing
I'm pondering about...
Maybe even then
When the end is near,
I will only feel happiness
And reminisce my years.

-Sky

From The Beat: Since we're all subject to that same end/ We're more interested in where your path will wend/In short, since every life has a built-in fall/The destination is known, so the journey is all!

Waiting To Get Out

Waiting to get out and roll a fat chop
Ready to buy a thizz and feelin' to pop
As days go by, makes me think about it even more
Three hits off a choppa that will have me blown
And feelin' myself off that 'dro
Chillin' at Hoover Park with all the homies
Wit' one hand on a chop and the other on a forty
Females be jockin' when I'm on the outs
They love my name, 'cause it's always in they mouth
It's nothin' to a hater
Just knowin' the fact that I'm a player

-Lil' Laylow

From The Beat: We really don't want to be hatin'/But it's very thin ice you're skatin'/Poppin' pills and blowin' 'dro/And alcohol will indeed lay you low/You can call yourself a player, if you choose/But you're a player in a game you can only lose/If drugs and drink is all you can see/How long do you think that you can remain free?

*Maybe it's all the sweeter
When we realize how soon
Something we love
Might easily be consumed*

My Thoughts

Evil thoughts got my mind trippin'
I be slippin' in the darkness, starin' the devil in the eyes
I know I'm going to die, He tells me why
Leading me away from God
I don't care: I hate God and his ways
I never pray; all I say is:
"Shhh happens"
Evil thoughts make me plot the next crime
Won't let me sleep
Life is cheap
My heart is deep in my body
My soul belongs to the devil
My life belongs to my 'cause
As I fall more in hell
Always locked in cells
All I say is, "Oh, well"
Evil thoughts got my mind trippin'

-Whacko

From The Beat: You've got us confused. You say you believe in the devil but not in God. Where does this "devil" reside? What reason is there for a devil in the world, if it is not to counter God? We don't know if there's a God or not, but we don't understand how you can believe in one, but not the other. We don't think you're looking the devil in the eye at all. We think that's just a convenient excuse for avoiding looking at yourself in the eye. You are the master of your fate, so if "Oh, well" is all that you can come up with, then you'll be saying a lot of it. Unfortunately, you'll be in a place where those that control your every movement look at you with exactly that same thought, "Oh, well." It's up to you, or it's up to no one!

All I Think About

As I sit in this room
I think about how much I miss you
As I drift away, going to sleep
I dream of me and you
When I close my eyes
All I see is yo' pretty smile
Smiling at me
I wish that you could see me
Just for a lil' while
But the circumstances that I'm in
Won't let my wish come true
I can't wait for that day
That it's jus' gone be me and you
Chillin' at the park
Looking into each other's eyes
Forgetting about our lives
Both lost in each other's time
I'm lost while I write this rhyme
'Cause I can't get you out of my head
You must've cast a spell on me
'Cause sometimes I can't even go to bed
I hate the fact that I gotta talk to you
Through the letters, in mail
If only you was with me that day
I wouldn't be in jail
Now my home is in this cell
Got hit with the long-ass twelve
An' I got six more to go
Just a couple of months left
For that one day I'll be home
Chill in the 'hood
With my female by my side
With you finna be with me, chula
You best be down to ride

-Eight Ball

From The Beat: You think twelve is a long-ass time?/Wait 'til you see what comes next if you keep doing crime/You say you want her "down to ride" with you beside her/Which means the game comes first, far ahead of the rider/Your poem has loss and pain and much more in it/ But without some change, your time with her won't last more than a minute

Daddy's Heart is Home

When you were born, your head was full of hair
I held you closely, promised I would be there.
You never cried, you watched the angels dance;
I could only imagine sweet songs as they pranced.
From that moment forward, your life I would protect;
I will go down in a blaze of glory until there's nothing left,
Make sure the world doesn't approach you without
respect

If someone decides differently, that I will not let
You're my baby, I see you living until the streets turn gold
And even then, I see me tuck you in when nights are cold.
I may not understand everything about a woman's choice,
But I'll understand it soon enough when you begin to
use that voice.

It will be real hard to see when you finally date;
Those years right there, I don't want to see but anticipate.
I want to teach you how to drive cars and be safe;
If we set a curfew, you know, don't be late,
Attend your graduation from college, go, girl, you made it!
I would have to let go then, though I'd hate it.
I'm very proud of you, you're intelligent;
The mistakes that you made in the past are all irrelevant.
The day will come real fast to where you move on
With your life. You could always come back 'cause
Daddy's heart is home

Stone, who is incarcerated in the SATF/Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, says The Beat Within inspires him to "free (his) soul's words." We're lucky enough to have them be freed within our pages. Very inspired and inspiring writing, Stone! We so appreciate the knowledge. We look forward to featuring your work in future issues.

A Sacred Place

I'm challenged to find pleasures of happiness each day...
Allowing myself to believe in hope, I enjoy thinking of
life this way...
Perhaps tomorrow will provide a blessing disguised in a
letter from you...
You've maintained my attention which creates a passion,
a purpose so true...
How could I explain what remains to be seen yet make
you understand...
I desire your permission to entertain for a change, a
comfort, holding your hand...
As you face emotional obstacles. I would make love to
your heart and mind, so to speak...
Because all is not lost in the end, you've still got me...
You truly ignite a sincere compassion in my life, so it
burns deep...
You've turned my want into a need and so I dream of you
in my sleep...
I arise each morning and to my surprise, your picture
keeps a smile on my face...
I then realize that you bring me joy, to my soul, a sacred place.

H. HUERTA

This next piece is sent in by H. Huerta, writing from Ad Seg at Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. This is an interesting piece that really paints a picture on the call of the streets. The sad part is our new friend here is now in for life. WE do hope to hear from H. Huerta down the road!

Varrio Love

As a kid growing up I heard stories about you
So through the years I ended up in love with you
I would see you on the corner store everyday with lots of
vatos around you
One day I had the courage to ask you out and join you
I gave you my whole life
I protected you when vatos talked about you behind
your back
I'd defend you and when vatos would want to fight with
you I'd fight for you
I had so much love for you that I did whatever you said
You had me hypnotized with your love and fame
I remembered them nights you would tell me to hurt
them vatos
because they said bad and disrespectful things about
you
I fought and killed for you
and now I find myself in the pinta doing 42 with life
because of you
you just caused me hurt and sadness but you know
what?
I will always love you even though you keep on hurting
me
You want to know something real funny?
I even have your name tattooed on me

DARRON J. GARCIA

Darron J. Garcia, currently locked up in a correctional facility in Tracy, Ca shares this powerful and creative poem. Darron describes and paints a picture with his words. He lets his imagination run free on paper because as you can see he's in a lonely prison cell. Darron, we can feel your frustration in not being able to experience all the wonders of nature. Hopefully, you'll be able to experience it all again some day soon.

My Lonely Prison Cell

Have you ever seen a rose grow
But one you couldn't smell
Have you ever watched a bird sing
But couldn't really tell
Have you ever watched the wind blow
Swiftly through the tree
But only left to wonder
How it felt to feel its breeze
Have you ever watched the rainfall down
Like teardrops from the sky
Have you ever wondered how it felt
To never, ever cry
Have you ever seen wild horses run
So effortlessly and free
Imagine what a tragedy
If they were stuck in here with me
This is my perspective
It's one I know too well
It's the story of my life
Looking out my prison cell

The Story of My Life

I would like to take this time to introduce myself; my name is Mr. Crosby L. Michael, Sr. I am an African American male, 44 years old. I was born in Detroit, Michigan, but I was raised in South Central Los Angeles in Watts. I had 6 brothers and 2 sisters. Now I only have 3 brothers and 1 sister. One of my youngest brothers was killed in 1986 in a drive-by shooting in L.A. My other 2 brothers and my one sister had passed away in 2006 back to back and they were much older than I was. I have 2 boys and one girl out there in L.A. So the main reason that I am writing you this story of my life is because I would love for all of the youngsters and teenagers to read my story because I have been to juvenile hall and CYA and now I am incarcerated for the rest of my life.

But before I start my story, I just would appreciate if you would please listen to what all that I am saying to you, OK? I lost my mom, my grandmom, and my grandfather in 1965, when I was just 2 years old, in a car accident. We were all hurt really, really bad in the accident, but I really do thank God that I am here to tell my story. Amen. My aunty had taken in all 9 of her sister's kids. When I turned 18 years old, my aunty sat me down and told me she wasn't my real mom, that my mom had gotten killed in a car accident. But I told my aunty that she will always be my mom until the day Jesus Christ calls me up. She is still living at the age of 76 and I really do appreciate what God has let her do for me in my lifetime, thank you, Jesus. I never did know my dad. I had only seen him one time in my life and that was when I was 17 years old. My dad passed away in 1997; may God bless his soul.

Now I really don't know what to call this story that I'm writing to the youngsters and teenagers who are incarcerated, but it all started back in 1976. I was just 13 years old. But, like I said, I grew up in Watts in all 3 of the projects, Nickerson Garden, Jordan Downs, and Imperial Courts. I was never a gang member and I never have used drugs in my life. People out there in the world think just because you are African American that you either are selling drugs or a gang member and that's not true. But, anyway, I started robbing people out there in the world for their hard earned money. I didn't get caught; I was told on by someone, so I was sent to juvenile hall at 13 years old.

I was sent to a group home that I didn't like, but I did good in the group home and I got out. I went back home to robbing people. I didn't stay out no time. When I turned 15, I was sent back to juvenile hall for robbery again. Back in the 70s, when I was going to the halls, it was really rough with the Crips and Bloods, and I do mean rough! So this time, after going to the hall, I was sent to another group home in Santa Barbara. I did very good; I went to school and I did what was asked of me. I stayed out of juvenile halls for about 6 and a half months and then I was sent to CYA for robbery when I had just turned 16.

I went to Preston, Karl Holton School, and Dewitt Nelsen (all CYAs) up north. I stayed in school and got my high school diploma. I really did good when I had gotten out of CYA, but when I turned 21, I went to Los Angeles County Jail and I saw one of my brothers in the county jail. He asked me what I was in the county for and I told him robbery again and my brother shook his head and asked me how much time I was looking at; I told him 6 years in prison. When I first hit prison back in 1984, I was scared as hell, ya feel me, because I had seen with my own eyes someone get killed and then you have the Bloods, Crips, Southsides, and Whites and we all go to war against each other.

Out of those 6 years I only had to do 2 and a half. I was released from prison in 1986. I was on parole for 1 year because I did good and I had a job and a family to take care of.

From 1986 until 1991 I stayed out of trouble; it wasn't hard to do, youngsters and teenagers. Then in 1991, around January, me and my kids went up to this park so they could play and I could play basketball. Around 5:00 me and my kids were walking home from the park in Bellflower and some young kids told the police that I had robbed them with a .357 Smith and Western. Now, I have never owned a .357 Smith and Western before in my life, but I was put in back of the police car and the police asked the kids if they were sure they had the right person and they said yes.

I was sent to jail again to go to court. I went to court a couple of times and they wanted to give me a deal for 9 years. They said if I took it to trial and lost, I would get 18 years. I had to take the deal even though I didn't rob the kids. My lawyer had stated to

Michael L. Crosby Sr. sends us his heartfelt story from a Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA. Michael wants to share his life story for all you readers, hoping to lead youngsters away from what he has experienced. He says, "People, if you do the crime, just do your time and stay strong. Don't cry about it because you put yourself in juvenile halls, CYA and prison." Michael, losing the love and trust of your family is the heaviest punishment for the crimes you committed. We're glad you've found peace with the Lord.

me that the kids said the police had made them say that it was me, but I couldn't beat my case because of my record. But, out of the 9 years I did 6.

So around 1997 I was paroled from Corcoran Level 3 yard. I was doing good again out there from 1997 until 1999. Then I was locked back up, this time for murder, but I'm really sorry I did it and I cried and asked God to forgive me and he did.

From 1984, 1991, and 1999 I have been going to Norwalk Court in Norwalk, California, and Norwalk Court isn't anything nice. So, anyway, I fought this murder case for two and a half years because they wanted to give me the death penalty for first degree murder. That was the deal, to be put to death. My lawyer talked with the DA, but the DA wasn't going for it because I'm a 3 striker. So, I had to go back and forth to court until they dropped the death penalty and I was given 250 years without the possibility of parole.

So here I am incarcerated for the rest of my life. But ever since I had been in and out of juvenile halls, CYA and prison, I have always told my loved ones that I was really sorry for hurting them and that I was going to do right when I got out, but all of the time I was just lying to them and myself. But now that I have life in prison all of my family members have turned their backs on me. They don't write me and I can't call because a block is on the phone. Now, people out there, crime really doesn't pay when you really find out that you have your loved ones and your kids out there that love and care for you. I just would like to say this and that I do try to talk to many of these youngsters in prison today, but they don't want to listen to me because they just want to kick it with their homies and smoke their weed and gang bang and drink their wine, but I tell them that a hard head makes a hard bed to sleep in.

So y'all believe in Jesus Christ? I do. All you have to do is just believe in your heart with all of your heart and soul and ask God to forgive you for all of your sins. It's not too late to repent. Just please get down on your knees and pray every day and night and God will answer your prayers, but you have to really believe in his word also. So, youngsters out there, please don't turn your backs on Jesus Christ because he died for all our sins and please listen to your parents because we all only have one life to live and please read your Bible and go to church. It's never too late and please, please, in God's name, don't listen to what your homies are telling you because they aren't going to be there for you like your loved ones. But for me I never, never in my life had any homies and God is my witness to that.

In closing, I would like to thank you for taking your time out in reading this. Please take care of yourself in and out there in the world and please, please stay out of trouble because jail isn't the way to live for the rest of your L-I-F-E...ya feel me? I really do pray that you do because it really, really does get very, very, very lonely behind these prison walls day and night. So, may God bless y'all that are incarcerated and those who are out in the world of today. But I would like for y'all to just stop and think, "Do I want to really spend the rest of my life locked up?" What is your answer? Jesus Christ is truly the light and the way, so please stay in school and be somebody.

Don't follow your homies; they are not good for you. So if anyone would like to contact me out there, please drop me a line or two (through The Beat) because it does get very, very, very, and I mean VERY lonely behind these prison walls many days and nights. Life isn't a J-O-K-E!! So, people out there, I must really say, "People, get ready because the train is coming; you don't need a ticket, just get on board, and the train, people, is Jesus Christ." Just please think before you act.

Young people, please listen to your parents and please stay in school. It's not too late to really be somebody. I know I'm not your dad, but maybe some of your dads were not there for you. For the youngsters that are incarcerated, you still do have a chance in L-I-F-E again. It's not too late. Just keep your head up and stay strong and pray. But holla at me if y'all feel me, ya hear?

My Life

I hope that these young guys and girls keep writing to The Beat Within because it gives them something to look forward to and let other people read about what they're going through being locked away.

One thing for sure I can say is that when I read their work I can relate to them because though I'm 53 years old, I've never been in any trouble until I caught my case in 1998 for killing my abuser to keep him from killing me when I tried to leave that day.

I feel their pain for being locked up away from family and friends who love you. I know that a lot of them had a rough young life growing up with all of the peer pressure that goes on today.

I feel that instead of the system always locking up our young girls and guys, they should help them be more active in society instead of turning their backs on them.

I wish that I could help these young people out and show them that they can be whatever they want to be in life if they give themselves a try and stop falling victim to the system. I would also like to help women and children that are being abused to get out before it gets too late for them as it was for me. When I do get out of prison, I want to work with abused people.

I have another poem I would like you to put in your next issue along with this letter and I pray the readers will be inspired by my poems as much as I am by their poems and letters. It is really nice to know that there are still people who care about us and are willing to let us put our poems out there. I hope one day people outside will get to read The Beat Within because I don't think people understand how hard it is being locked up like you're an animal in a cage; that's how I feel being in here.

Valerie Seeley writes us from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York State. Valerie, has been through her ups and downs. She would like to share some of her wisdom and knowledge with everybody in The Beat Within, because she understand how it feels to be locked up. Valerie wants to share her experiences in life and also give her ideas about how the system can help youngsters instead of keeping them locked up. Here's a little bit of Valerie's story so you readers can get to know her a little better. With that said, keep touching lives through the power of your pencil Valerie! We cherish your wisdom.

HATE!

People ask me why do I hate;
 I tell them because it's easy to stay ahead.
 People ask me do I know how to love;
 I say yes because it's something I was taught.
 People say I can't love and hate at the same time;
 I tell them that's not true because you can love family and friends
 but hate what you're going through.
 People ask me why am I so much in pain;
 I tell them to try to walk in my shoes and only then will
 they understand.
 People ask me what happened to me to make me feel this way;
 I tell them about the abuse I went through at the age of 42.
 People ask me why did I stay and I tell them if I told you,
 you wouldn't understand what goes on when you're being abused.
 People ask me why I didn't get help;
 I tell them it's easy to ask why when you don't understand.
 People ask me do I still hate;
 I say yes because it's hard to let go of all the pain.
 People ask me will I ever be me again; I tell them it's hard to say.
 I hate myself because of what I had to do to survive my abuse.
 I hate because I let my abuser destroy my life.
 But I love because I am stronger today than I was yesterday.
 So to answer your question, yes, you can love and hate at
 the same time.
 So never let anyone control your every move.

GERI VANCE

The mighty Geri Vance is back! He has become a regular contributor to The Beat Within. It's always great to have Geri write too. He writes us from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. We must add he really does have a gift and we appreciate his generosity in sharing it.

The Parable

The best method for revenge as the weapon of choice
 Is the depth of finesse when expressed in a voice

Leaving papers moist, pressed with the seal of a tear
 As if when pierced in the rear from the steel of a spear

To hear the bungalows drumming that summons the spirits
 In a traditional ritual rhythm kneeling humble to hear it

Don't fear it, let it embrace and captivate the emotions
 Habitating like a captain navigating the ocean

Cracked glass potions opened to bestow the scrolls
 A molded loaf of bread is the antidote to woes

The arrow's bow is the soul of the impoverished
 The barren soul is the goal of the accomplishment

A preponderance of relent and vindictive intent
 To the extent its strength was so immense that ignorance was
 its defense

Since the message sent inside the bottle never made it afloat
 It choked the pulp out of hope like the braid of a rope

The guillotine's stroke was supposed to circumcise the tail
 And what was seen by the eye was to be denied as well

Human beings on a boat about the size of a cell

Incisors biting fingernails for they were surprised it sailed

Is the parable of the tale about the lukewarm saints
 A generation from the ferment of the fruit with no taste

Along the route destined to abrupt demise
 The third eye won't blink because the duct is dry

It's like trying to deny that the rose is red
 If being lowered in a hole is suppose to hold the dead

When in the blink of an eye the host is shed
 So being lowered by a rope was to console the dread

So close to the edge that the plunge of faith
 Becomes the sum of the sake at a lunge away

Deliverance, when it comes from the crumbs of the plate
 Will make the base of the tongue become numb to the taste

Is the parable of the ones who were shun from grace
 When it's the potter who creates from a clump of clay

Treated as if they were wrung from the sponge of waste
 As if they can't see the web on its spun display

To The Chow Hall

Walking in the rain toward the chow hall
Too far to run...

(From J building)

Though the rain is soaking
A sauntering steady pace will do.
Puddles, large and small, dot the way
And pose grave challenges to dry feet.
Bursts of speeding opposing traffic hinder as well
But must be managed, face down,
Against the wind
I dream
Of my daughter's face
And what they will pour onto a plastic tray
Down the line.

From The Womb (read loud)

From the womb
To the tomb
We zoom...
Beedah bah
Beedah boom...
Boom, boom, boom.

Let me go...

Bing bang
Hit the floor
Jibber, jabber
Swigger, swagger
Spaghetti Eddie
Guantanamo
Doan won no mo
Locked up too much, too damn long
Let me go...
Now.

Camaraderie and Brotherhood

There is a camaraderie,
A brotherhood
Misery understands.
It defies logic,
But it has a reason
It does (the right thing).

Some May Have Been Cruel

In the past some may have been cruel
Some maybe not
But in here,
You feel
Only the casualties of cruelty
The suppression of human existence
The submersion of the spirit
Spurred into sadness and frustration
Yielding to anger and finally rage
Sometimes turned inward
Most times turned outward
Most times one convict against another
Most times victimizing the weakest,
The most vulnerable,
The most forgotten.

Duncan Purdy is currently locked up in Massachusetts Correctional Facility in Norfolk, Massachusetts. He wants to share a few poems describing his experiences in jail, and some poems are from pure creativity. Duncan is a big fan of The Beat Within and loves all the work that's put into it! This what we do here at The Beat! We put this powerful weekly together so that all you writers can have a voice and share your poetry, and life lessons with all. Enjoy his pieces.

Heroin

Heroin
Seducing and swallowing
Evidenced by scars and shame
A narcotic haze
A quick glaze
A syringe loaded
To die for
'Cause you are sick
Fix quick
Rob the drugstore
Come back for more
The battle is never won, never done
It wants you for the duration
There is no vacation
Stay around downtown
It is in your yard
It is on your porch
It is there, everywhere
Looking to get high--why?
It is invisible
Indivisible,
Always there
It don't care.

You Say Be Quiet

You say be quiet, do your time
Leave it alone, let it go
If not, it will grow
And take a hold
Don't be bold
Go on, don't take it with you
That's what they want you to do
Oh, yeah, you say
Days will go by
And I'll forget, won't regret
You say, play
And go away, just do a day
I say no, it won't go
I'm in my mind
I want to grind
I am mad, I ain't glad
I don't want to be in a cage
I'm full of rage
I mean to say what I gotta say
There's just no other way, not then, not today.
What is real you can't steal
It's what I feel
To me
That's the deal
If you can't dig it, chig it
Man, you don't know me
If you think I can
You got to go and find another man
From this way I ain't gonna stray
There won't be any other day,
Any other way. Dig it.

Book Title

A sure best seller
 Twenty ways to escape from prison
 I will bet
 People will buy it
 Who aren't even in prison
 Try to love someone in your dreams
 It is easier
 Climb a mountain in your mind
 Reach higher with your brain, don't refrain
 Watch
 With whom you talk
 Watch
 With whom you walk
 Watch
 To whom you listen
 Sleep well
 Before you go to hell
 It won't really matter,
 No one there will tell.

Phantom Freedom

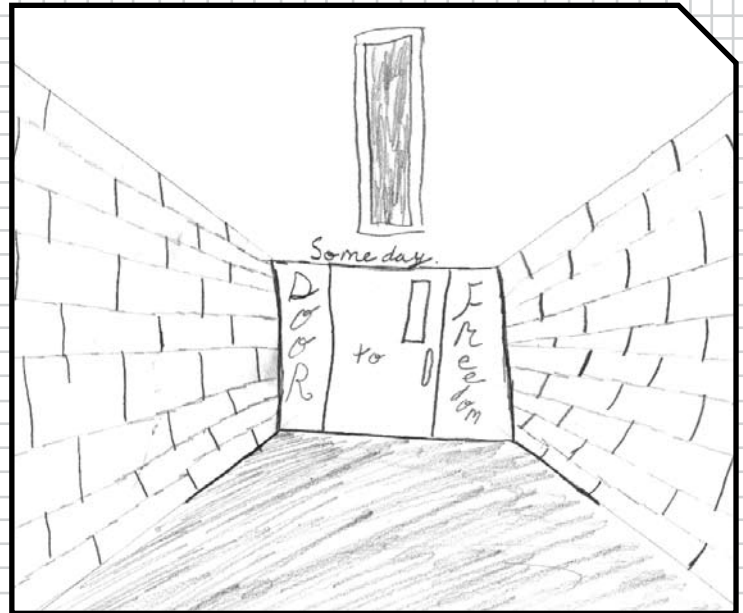
The guy in the cell across from me had his leg
 amputated
 I guess I was dreaming about him
 Because I dreamed I had a phantom leg
 Something like being in prison and dreaming of
 phantom freedom.

Handball (With A Beat)

Men grunting and panting
 Whacking a rubber ball
 Solidly against a wall
 Concussions hollowly ringing out
 Like echoes, popping
 Men laughing and gasping
 Inexorably
 Until one falters
 And the ball dribbles away aimlessly
 Tirelessly, they continue the game
 Rapping and slapping, bouncing, leaping,
 Swinging and stretching in vain
 The blue rubber wins every time.

To Stay No Longer

My thoughts had betrayed me
 All hope had vanished
 All what I thought was real
 I could not feel
 It was only an illusion,
 a delusion
 In my derision
 There was a decision
 From under my blanket
 I swam upstream
 I confided and decided
 Not to be locked in this prison any longer
 My heart grew stronger
 On that day
 There was
 No other way to stay
 I had decided
 I would not be derided
 I could stay no longer,
 My heart grew stronger
 And stayed that way



Bird in Paradise

Rhythmic pounding
 Drones through the aorta of the cell block
 Providing a mantle for an abysmal opera
 Waves of sound carom through garbled and loud
 Contorting and expanding,
 Angry voices, cackling laughter
 Shroud the gray caverns
 A garbled voice filled with static
 Is briefly interrupted
 By the sound of sweet song
 The singer--
 She's a man by birth
 A woman in a man's body
 But today, in this prison,
 She's a bird in paradise.

Blueboy and I

Blueboy and I
 Surfing the ink under the stars
 Ascending the asphalt to Highway Heaven
 The engine purrs
 Cylinders firing
 I am free in a land I know
 Roaring out
 Crackling pipes signal
 The call of the wild
 Tires gripping and screeching
 Headlight bobbing up and down
 Weaving through the night air
 Gathering spirits to the wind
 Blueboy and I
 Under the stars

My Story

I would first like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to read my letter; I am sure you're very busy.

Please afford me a moment to introduce myself. My name is Dwayne Waterman, I was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, and have lived there my entire life. I graduated from a small redneck high school in Schertz, Texas, named Samuel Clemens H.S. I attended business courses at St. Philips Community College and was doing quite well until...

I used to live with my older half-brother Joe, his common-law wife Cindy, and their two daughters, Ashley and Josette, up until '93 or '94. We had an argument and they kicked me out, which was cool with me; they both had drug and alcohol problems. I moved in with my mom in the later part of '94; I lived with her right up until the end.

On December 2, 1999, my grandfather died at a VA hospice of a stomach tumor and was buried at Fort Sam Houston with full military honors. Joe was contacted about Grandpa's passing by an uncle. After I left, Joe and Cindy split up and Joe started dating his cocaine dealer and they both moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where her elderly dad took them in and supported them. When this nosy uncle contacted Joe, Joe packed up his old lady, her son, and all their belongings and moved on down to Texas.

Joe remembered a will that our grandpa wrote when we were children that left him the grandparents' home. When Joe left, I was the grandson there to take care of our grandpa. I have a younger brother, Eric, but he has his own wife and kids, along with all the problems that come with a wife and kids, so he was completely unable to help out; so the burden lay on me. Well, my grandpa noticed that the only time Joe would write was when he was trying to get money.. "Grandpa, they are going to cut off my telephone if I don't pay the bill; I need \$400.00 to pay them. Can I have the money, please?..." sort of letters. He finally saw Joe for the turd he really was and wrote a new will. This will stated that the last surviving spouse would decide who got the house instead of the house going straight to Joe.

Joe showed up at the cemetery looking like the Beverly Hillbillies, stayed until the funeral was done and then walked up to our grandma and said, "Hey, when can me and Gina move in? I've got all my shhh right here." My grandma was crying and mourning the passing of the man she spent 60+ years with; the last thing she wanted to discuss was the will, the house, or even Joe. She looked up at him while crying and then yelled out, "You're not getting the house. Dwayne is!!" and then pointed at me. Joe called her every name in the book, threw some chairs, and stormed out. As he passed me, he said, "I'm going to get you for this!" like I had anything to do with it. Actually, I thought my uncle, the very one that called Joe, was going to inherit the house.

I put that particular moment of the interruption of Joe out of my mind and tried to return to some normalcy in my life. Then, one day...

April 23, 2002, I was sitting at home with my niece Alyssa, whom my mom and I had raised since she was three days old and I looked upon as if my own daughter, and I got this letter from the Child Advocacy Center. It said something to the effect of: "Someone has accused you of abusing their children; I would like to sit down and talk to you about it. You have an appointment set for (something like a week later)." I saw the phone number and immediately called and had the appointment moved up to the next day. I wanted to know what the hell was going on. I never "abused" any child in my life and the fact that someone was saying that I abused theirs angered me and hurt me at the same time.

I arrived at the Center promptly before my appointment was scheduled; my younger brother went with me for support. I met a woman and, although it's been over seven years, I will never forget this woman's name. She is the perfect example of someone abusing their position. Amy XXX was

Dwayne Waterman, previously at Powledge Unit in Palestine, Texas, sends his story from Navasota, Texas, which is all apart of the Texas Department of Corrections. Dwayne wants to share his disturbing story with everyone and give his input on life, his life. It takes a special person to be able to find peace and a positive outlook on life after going through what he has gone through; as he continues to grow in spirit and soul.

her name; she was short, fat, very friendly (at the time) and seemed very helpful...that was until we got into her office behind closed door. When I walked into her office, she had a video on pause. It was an image of a little girl. Amy sat behind her desk and asked me if I knew who this little girl was. I looked at her and she kind of looked like my oldest niece, Ashley. It wasn't; in fact, it was her sister, Josette. I hadn't seen those girls since 1994 when I left their house after my argument with their parents. Amy then played the video; I clearly heard Josette say, "My uncle," then Amy pushed fast forward for a few seconds, played it and I didn't quite hear what Josette said then. I really wasn't paying attention because all of a suddenly it dawned on me what "someone" had said about "abusing" their children. I had this sinking feeling in my stomach. My nieces Ashley and Josette claimed that in September of 1995 at my grandma's house, our entire family molested them both.

One day, one month, one time, my mom, eighty-four year old grandma, my younger brother and sister, as well as myself, all molested them in some wild gang-bang orgy sex extravaganza and it never happened again. The explicit details that were given were so outlandish that there is no way a seven and five year old could withstand it. If that wasn't bad enough, there wasn't even a lame attempt to try to cover up the extraordinary descriptions.

While all of this was going on around me, I was slowly driving myself insane. I constantly cried, felt depressed and, from time to time, entertained thoughts of ending it all. I loved children but not like this; this is something a true monster would do. I started to hear voices; the voices of my little flower Alyssa, my other nieces and my only nephew playing and laughing and calling me. As my mental status crumbled, I began to hear other voices and uncontrollably cry for hours on end. I heard these varying voices saying, "What are you going to do? What are you going to do?" They would start in a very low, distorted, demonic (if you will) sound and would slowly change to normal and then very high pitched. I experienced a level of depression that I don't wish on my worst enemy. I could not, for the life of me, see any other way out except to end it.

I was placed on various medications to control whatever it was they thought I had, whatever it was named at the time; bipolar, manic depressive, one doctor told me that I had become borderline schizophrenic. I took Lorazepam, Trazadone, Zyprexa, Effexor, Abilify, Thorazine. I was prescribed all kinds of meds; these are just the ones I can remember the names of. No matter what it was, I always felt this deep, dark sickness beneath the surface of my mentality, waiting to break through.

I was out on bond when my attorney called me into his office. I was taken there by my mom and Alyssa came with us; she loved her Uncle Dwayne. He told me that the prosecution was going after 30 years aggravated sexual assault of a child, 15 years per child, and that they would more than likely get it. He said he managed to work a deal for me with the prosecutor; eight years, 1 count of indecency with a child by exposure, not contact. He pointed that out a lot during our conversation; he said had it been by contact, they could raise it up to aggravated time, but since he worked that sweet deal for me, I wouldn't have to register as a sex offender, I could just pick up my life right where I left off. He made everything sound so good; I can't believe how stupid I was. When he said this, I just knew he had my best interest at heart; I knew he was my buddy. He said seeing how I was a first time offender, had never been in trouble with the law, that in two or three months I would

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parole right out of the county jail. But none of this was going to happen unless I signed this plea bargain.

I didn't even look at the plea bargain. I just signed, in front of my tearful mother and wide-eyed niece, I signed my life away. On May 3, 2004 I went into court with my buddy, my attorney, and he entered my plea bargain.

Whoever you are, man, woman, young, old, if I had known that my own attorney was lying to me, I would never have signed that plea. I was sentenced on May 3, 2004; I asked the judge if I could have a few days to gather my affairs before entering jail and he agreed to give me 7 days to straighten things out.

On May 7, 2004 I walked into the 227th district court and the judge sentenced me to 8 years in prison for indecency with a child by exposure. In June of 2004 I was transferred to Garza West Transfer Facility and my life has never been the same.

I contacted my attorney's office and asked his secretary if my plea bargain stated anything that my attorney had promised me and guess what...nothing was found.

I learned that the law changed in 1995 and that I was under the old law and had a mandatory release date. Here in Texas, they have what's now called discretionary-mandatory parole; they have to, if they feel like it, release you. If they don't feel like that you have learned your lesson, they give you a 1, 3, or 5 year set-off and at the end of your set-off, they bring you back up for parole and the whole cycle could repeat itself again.

The parole counselor wrote and told me that my crime was listed as having occurred on December 1, 1996; kind of convenient, huh, that I supposedly committed my crime just after the law changed and now I am under mandatory-discretionary parole. I contacted my attorney's office again and asked for a copy of my indictment and, sure enough, the date of my alleged crime was December 1, 1996. So it looks like I'm going to be here until May 10, 2012. Here in the great state of Texas a convicted sex offender must attend a sex offender treatment program (SOTP) in order to be considered for super-strict parole. I did not commit my crime, I refuse to attend a mandatory class and if you do attend, there is no guarantee that they will parole you. You must sign paperwork declaring that you really did commit your crime and you are guilty of your crime. I will continue to fight even if I never find anyone that will help me.

My life has gone through some of the most drastic changes that I have ever gone through. I have watched in letters as my mom and Alyssa's living conditions have deteriorated. It started out with them having problems paying bills, then various utilities were disconnected, then

in April '06 my grandma died and my mom was unable to keep up with the mortgage, so they became homeless. Now they struggle daily for even the basic necessities of life. They were living with my younger brother Eric, his wife and their three spoiled kids. My mom and sister-in-law got into an argument and my sister-in-law kicked my mom and Alyssa out into the street. She's now back living with my step dad, which is even worse because he's verbally abusive to my mom and the kind of language he uses is not the kind we want a 6 year old girl to be around.

I myself am suffering somewhat just seeing my two angels suffering out there in streets while I'm locked in this concrete hell like a rabid animal. I dream about them every night and I have been waking up tearful because my soul is tortured; I am in a horrific level of depression. I have been finding some solace in writing things like this and drawing things like that; I hope you like "the inside me". I drew it shortly after coming to this particular unit. I have been waiting so long to tell my story.

As for me personally, when I came into prison in June of 2004, I weighed 600 pounds. I couldn't walk more than a few feet without breathing like I ran two miles, my left arm constantly tingled; when I was out in the world I smoked 2 or 3 packs of cigarettes a day. My mind was in a never-ending cycle of raging thoughts, racing memories and wild thinking.

As of today in 2007, I weigh 300 pounds less, I haven't smoked since I was at home, through intense study in Buddhism and Christianity I have found the peace in my head that I never would've been able to find on my own. I have literally changed mind, body and soul.

I've often thought that if I had not come to prison, I'd probably be dead or at least I would've had a massive heart attack and been paralyzed or something. Coming to prison has made me a better person. If it hadn't been for my old half brother lying about me and having me pay for something I never did, I don't think I would've lasted this long on earth.

I have been wanting to express myself for so long that now I have the chance I don't want to ruin it. I want to be able to help someone who's in a similar situation and maybe, just maybe, I can help them out. I want to be able to help bring peace to their souls like mine was. If they hear my story, they'll feel as if someone out there really does understand what they're going through.

Here's my story, told from a small redneck town called Palestine, Texas, in a small racist, inbred, hillbilly unit named Powledge Unit from an intelligent, artistic, poetic, lonely, innocent monster named Dwayne.

Struggles

I'm dying inside,

Not from needles, blood cells or medications

But from the implications,

My tracks I will trace.

Am I not free to love, kiss or touch?

Look at my face, it betrays me and my love is considered a sin.

I'm not one or the other, or both.

I will not let the "American Dream" categorize me.

I'm going to love whomever I want and remember the hopes, dreams, hate and the struggles that came before me.

These are only a few things I have to carry,
So understand why I stand before you with a tear on my face.

BRE

Bre, aka Nightmare, writes to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Bre, is sharing a couple good pieces with us. We hope that he keeps coming through with some good writing and positive insights.

Distant Eyes

The eyes are our most sensitive organ and when you look and gaze into another person's eyes you are looking at the most beautiful jewels in the universe;

And if you look down beyond that surface beauty, it's the most beautiful jewel in the universe because that's the universe looking at you;

We are the eyes of the cosmos, so that, in a way, when you look deeply into somebody's eyes, you're looking deep into yourself. And the other person is looking deeply into that same self...

I found solace in the company of those I felt showed me the respect and understanding that I was yearning for.

David "Sharky" Keeton, while incarcerated in Corcoran State Prison, is doing much to change the outlook of at-risk youth. He is a facilitator for the "Changing Within" program, a juvenile program at the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison at Corcoran. Even while busy with his program, he makes time to write and share with our readers. We applaud you, David, for trying to make a positive difference in the lives of our young people.

Cause and Effect, Mind Pollution

The link between local street gangs and dangerously influential prison gangs is an issue that parents and aspiring young gang-bangers should constructively discuss and be aware of.

Unless you've been exposed by a family member or friend who happens to be a committed soldier to a prison gang, you are probably naive to the fact that close to all of the gang violence on the streets today is directly influenced by the politics written and enforced in prison.

There used to be a time when children were off limits and exempt from any form of participation and/or exposure to the business of a once clandestine element. Times have since changed and with those changes it is now an acceptable practice to induct children. In fact, it is encouraged. Why? Because children are easy, even eager, to be manipulated and utilized by those that they choose to look up to. The sad truth is that they are viewed as nothing more than a means to an end in the eyes of someone who could be so cold and callous, exploiting their services for small stuff to crimes as serious as murder.

Prison gang members are masters of manipulation. It's literally a part of the gang membership curriculum in prison to season oneself in what they view as an art. A classic example of such manipulation is to get a kid to believe that his sacrifices at such a young age can only warrant a short vacation in Y.A. versus "If I do it, I'll be facing a life sentence." The truth of the matter is kids who do serious crimes, on top of being labeled a "gang member," get the same punishment as an adult. The truth is gang members don't get breaks or second chances.

Kids look up to gang members who've been to prison for a number of reasons. For starters, they are celebrated as somewhat survivors who paid their dues on the front lines of a war. The whole image and appearance of being a warrior of some sort is a misconception that troubled kids aspire to become. Seasoned veterans even go so far as introducing kids to concepts, constitutions and laws that initiate lifelong commitments to gangs, in or out of incarceration. They do so with the same tactics that a salesman would use to promote a product.

Speaking from a personal standpoint, there was a time when my Homeboys meant everything to me and I considered them my family. Since I was unable to find a common ground with my parents and our encounters were usually unpleasant, I found solace in the company of those I felt showed me the respect and understanding that I was yearning for. Because I was always at odds with my father, I looked up to the older gang members on my block and those returning home from prison/Youth Authority. This was my first interpretation of respect and illusions of what a gangster was.

Respect is a key factor within any criminal circle. Without it, you could quickly be seen as a liability, someone in the way. For a young ambitious gang member who yearns the same respect as those he sees around him, the only logical way to acquire it is to emulate those who appear

to have the most respect. Unfortunately, that would be those in prison for putting in work or those returning from the journey.

And so begins a destructive cycle of crime and punishment. As I draw once again from an objectionable past of my own, I recall the tug-of-war between good and evil and how my indecisiveness gave in to the latter. The latter consisting of a love that seemed unconditional at the time, versus my parents, who without a doubt were out to protect my best interests. However, I was unable to comprehend those intentions nor their approach to counsel me at the time. As a result, I viewed my parents as the oppressors and I rebelled. Because of the poor choices I made as a young man, I spent most of my adolescent years in Juvenile Hall and Youth Authority. Somewhere in between, without me even realizing it, my loyalties shifted from family to the code of the streets and the politics of a prison movement. I also became institutionalized.

The grave effect that gang members have on the youth of today can be summed up in two words, "Mind Pollution." The process of Mind Pollution begins with the propaganda that originates in prison, which in turn spills into the streets by way of those paroling. As I mentioned earlier, kids are fixed on the illusion that those who go to prison and survive exemplify the characteristics of what it is to be a gangster, including the poison that profusely flows out of their mouths.

In conclusion, I've merely outlined the root cause of a virus that I call "Mind Pollution." However, there are many contributing factors that effect the direction of an at-risk adolescent in the form of mind pollution. Unfortunately, that would entail chapters of elaboration. Instead, I submit that parents/guardians consider the following in their course of intervention:

- 1.) We vs. They dichotomy
- 2.) Positive guidance vs. Dictatorship
- 3.) Trust vs. Suspicion

The We vs. They Dichotomy is an approach that implies when we (parents/guardians) speak and direct, they (our children) shall obey. We take the position of a dictator, where the need for respect and authority outweighs the concept of love, understanding, and positive guidance. We fail to promote the healthy independent judgment of a young man by looking at everything with a suspicious eye and blindly believing that our harsh criticisms contribute to the inspiration of a child to do or try something different.

For the sake of argument, I yield to the position that perhaps in our desperate quest to deter our children away from the jaws of corruption and evil, we've unconsciously pushed them into compromising positions, waving a finger in anger and frustration as opposed to influencing them to embark on a generative path. A family is like a team. It's our responsibility to coach. If it's so easy for a crook to mislead our children into a cycle of self-destruction, then what does that really say about our tactics as coaches?

It's a wake-up call for us to step up our game and get to really know our kids. Frustration is a poor excuse for inadequate coaching.

A Convict's Lament

From Quentin to Corcoran and Pelican Bay,
 Just to name a few of the places we stay.
 Buried alive in a solitary pit,
 Washing my clothes in the same place I shhh,
 Spit, piss, and bathe like a mutha efin' bird
 'Cause you only get to shower on every third
 Day of the week; my situation's bleak,
 Stuck inside a hellhole of utter defeat.
 Months turn to years for a felon in debt
 And never going home is a shocking concept.
 American nightmare, political tool,
 We got thirty-four prisons and every one's full.
 I got issues to spew many choose to eschew
 I'm in tune with the truth 'cause I got the best view.
 This place is a zoo for the vile and uncouth,
 A message to the unruly misguided youth.
 Many sleepless nights spent out of touch with the stars,
 Through the bars I see tattoos and razor blade scars.
 A convict's lament, no crook is exempt
 With more than enough time to plot the next hit.
 So sometimes I question if some really like me,
 Perhaps it's a tactic to get close and strike me.
 Knife me 'cause fightin' is futile in here
 When you're working with seconds and not one to spare.
 Somewhere in the scope of a trigger-happy cop
 Itchin' to squeeze it and blow off your top.
 No crook is exempt from a convict's lament,
 Reflecting on decades of wasted time spent
 Away from my people who can't comprehend
 That "life" means you never see freedom again.
 My fatherless seed that I never get to see
 So much to be said, but I'll never be freed
 To lead or impart with a few simple tools,
 Like how to evade when you're dealing with fools
 On some hooligan shhh, the danger's imminent,
 Rewind a verse or two the price is evident.

Movin' Past The Past

Lately I been thinking of the past
 So close behind.
 Where the aftermath of yesterday
 Weighs heavy on my mind.
 Intertwined with new horizons
 And torn between two sides,
 Where the past and present journey
 Eternally collide...
 Nowhere to hide and so I strive to find
 A peace within my quest
 At odds with every demon
 That lurks inside my chest.
 Undaunted by dilemmas,
 I calculate the steps
 Cause every one is crucial
 To resurrect what's left.
 To be a better man than what I've been,
 A better teacher, leader, friend.
 A better father, better son
 Awakened from oblivion.
 Redeem my soul for every sin
 Despite these walls that shut me in.

Survival's My Religion

In a world that's inattentive
 The meek seek hope in vain.
 A hustler drinks to help him think
 And numb his hunger pains.
 Blow life into the game?
 I'll paint a picture crystal clear.
 Survival means to stifle any consequence you fear.
 Like Malcolm X conveyed,
 By any means to persevere,
 These faceless slums and heartless guns
 That curse us far and near.
 Why talk about solutions
 We never act upon?
 Though warring souls may yearn for peace
 The path is stretched too long.
 If there is a god who's watchin'
 I trust he understands
 Why some resort to measures
 Conflicting with his plan.
 On a wretched piece of land I stand,
 A product of "The Hood."
 Where "The Hustle" contradicts intent
 To make it out for good.
 Survival's my religion
 In a narrative that's real,
 Sometimes you have to think and act
 Against the way you feel.
 Like a soldier in distress
 Every step's a constant threat.
 Over money, drugs, and sex,
 Under pressure every step.
 Who's next? Envision death
 Through the eyes of your friends,
 Doped up or locked down
 In correctional pens.
 Out of touch with the stars
 Where nothing else matters.
 Where ruthless minds thrive
 And fragile ones shatter
 To pieces. My thesis,
 A dose of the truth.
 Where the plan's inconclusive
 For saving our youth.
 In a jail cell I mean well,
 Inside of my heart
 Determined to excel
 Where dreams fall apart.
 Alone in the dark
 Where my body grows old
 With nothing but yesterday's demons to hold.

Dear Beat

Greetings from Corcoran State Prison. Just wanted to say thanks for printing my expressions. Furthermore, thank you for your kind words. Your thoughts affirm that my sense of direction is on point. I'm inspired by that; thank you again.
 Enclosed you'll find a few more pieces at your disposal. I've also included a few things to share my passion for saving kids and an outline of a program which I'd like to start, but I need participants to bring it to fruition. Hopefully, what I've enclosed will speak for itself. I appreciate any feedback you can offer. The need for intervention is urgent! And I want to do my part in the process any way that I can. I realize y'all must be busy. So take your time; I have mastered the art of patience!
 With hopes for a brighter future, take care.
 In solidarity,

I Have a Dream

By Martin Luther King Jr., was delivered on the steps at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. on August 28, 1963.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination still sadly cripple the life of the Negro. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appealing condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and The Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check in which has come back marked "insufficient funds". But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold, which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy, which has engulfed the Negro community, must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "when will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from

Shawn Montgomery is currently incarcerated in Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. He is an intelligent writer with a lot of knowledge that he wants to share with everyone reading The Beat Within. He brings a lot of wisdom to the table giving his take to us readers. Without further said, here goes some wisdom for your eardrums plus MLK Jr.'s "I Have A Dream".

narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends that in spite of the difficulties frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal"

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit-down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, who's governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream today that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith, which I return to the South. With this faith we be able to hew out the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning; my country, tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my father's died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring. "

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!
Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!
But only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennes-see!
Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi!

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children Black men and White men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

In remembrance of
"A Great King"
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968

The Truth She Can't Handle

For years I've listened to women say that they appreciate it when men are straight with them. They tell us to say what we mean and mean what we say. "No beating around the bush" as they put it.

But I've often wondered if these champions of honesty and forwardness could accept the truth if it were revealed to them raw and uncut. Today, I'm going to put their fortitude to the test.

I want to know, if they can accept the notion that the ball may no longer be in their court; that the dynamic of dating and courtship has changed and with it a shift to power toward the male of species.

In actuality, the position of strength has always been in the male's corner. But because of hundreds of years of western tradition, with the male being placed in the role of suitor for the chaste female, the sexual muscle of the women has maintained a certain controlling grip on the mating ritual, but not anymore.

Over the last 40 years, the feminist movement has produced a generation of women who revel in their womanhood. They take pride in their strength and have no problems embracing their sexuality. Of course, this openness has come with a hefty price.

Unlike their mothers and grandmothers who were placed on pedestals of purity because of how they defined what it meant to be a lady, the women of the new millennium are dealing with the consequences of exposing their hand and revealing themselves to be uninhibited creatures with healthy appetites for copulation (sex).

The frankness of this modern feminine prototype has allowed men to re-evaluate their positions and discover that their own sexual muscle carries an equal value to the one they've been chasing. Couple that knowledge with the fact that single Black women outnumber single Black men ten-to-one in some cities and there is little questions as to which way the scales is tipped.

With the deck stacked clearly in our favor, it's easy to give women the honesty they've always wanted... what reason is there to lie?

When they ask if we're currently involved, the answer should be as simple as saying, "yeah, I have a girlfriend I'm feeling right now. But I think I can make time for you as well, don't worry, my lady is very understanding. As a matter of fact, let me introduce you, she's right over there".

I know it sounds crazy but since most women are already on a time-sharing program, they're unaware of, why not put the card on the table so that everyone knows where they stand?

Besides, what choice does she have? She's the victim of a numbers game that has created "players" out of lames and "pimps" out of chumps.

By her own account, her only option to combat loneliness inside of his chaotic dating scheme includes: dating other women, keeping the batteries fresh in her pocket rocket, going white, buying a dog, lowering her standards, accepting solitude, opening her purse and paying the cost for exclusivity or waiting for the prison doors to open to offset the unbalance.

Unfortunately, this is the reality of the new relationships paradigm. Women can either find a way to win with it or continue living a lie believing some fairytale prince is going to come to their rescue.

This is as real as it gets. Nobody said that the truth was pretty. The question is can she handle it?

The Story of Eric and Jeremy

Eric and Jeremy are the same age, attend the same school, and even share some classes. They eve live in the same neighborhood. But, that's where the similarities end.

You see, Eric is handsome young boy with his dark hair and looks, he even dresses fancy with flared collars, expensive shoes, and sometimes even a suit.

Jeremy on the other hand is a simple young boy. He's overweight, has dark hair, and finds it difficult to develop serious friendships. He's constantly the object of bullies and bad jokes, and sometimes runs away in tears from the hurt he feels. He's also prime meat fat a predator.

Eric is a predator, and sees Jeremy as a person who needs a friend and someone he can use. He convinces Jeremy that he's the only friend he has and will do anything for him. He even stands up for him when the other kids at school pick on him.

One day, Jeremy happened to overhear a conversation Eric was having with some other students. What he heard was Eric saying how he actually felt about him, and, what he really meant to him as a friend.

Once again, Jeremy was crushed, but this time he didn't run away crying. This time, he got angry and told Eric he didn't need that kind of a friend and he'd be fine going through life without him as a friend.

As time went on, Eric became another one of the many kids who targeted Jeremy and was crueler than they, because of his past closeness to Jeremy.

Both boys graduated from school, and went on to college. Eric ended up dropping out and depending on his good looks to get him through life. Jeremy not only graduated from college with honors, but also went on to head a fortune 500 company.

As it turned out, Eric had to humble himself before Jeremy and begged him for a favor. Eric, thinking Jeremy is still weak and impressionable, wanted Jeremy to take care of him and give him money, whenever he wanted it.

Jeremy decided to take a different approach. He gave Eric a job in his company, paid him an entry-level salary, and now has Eric calling him sir and apologizing all the time for the way he treated Jeremy when they were younger.

The moral of the story is, no matter what others may think of you, what's important is what you think of yourself.

Wisdom Through Poetry

For those of you who haven't had an opportunity to listen to spoken word poetry, you don't know what you're missing. The messages delivered are to the point, no holds barred, and not sugar coated.

Spoken word poetry is not new to the area. It has been around for nearly 20 years, but has gone ignored by the populace that prefers loud music, dangerous clubs, and undressed patrons,

Inasmuch as some people never want anyone to tell them what they need to do to make their lives better, there is still a need to at least try it before you condemn it. It couldn't hurt, and you could walk away with more than you bargained for.

The poets speak of the need for awareness and the reality of our day-to-day lives. Some of it may come across as a bit radical, but the truth sometimes has to hurt.

These men and women are very educated when it comes to the economics and social graces we take for granted. They spend more at the firing line than any of us, and they see and hear the things we ignore.

Sometimes, when its revealed to someone, the things they try to pretend don't exist, that word is perceived as radical or just plain trouble.

Throughout the live of African-Americans, awareness is something that's always been preached. The late Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were at the forefront of creating awareness, and since they were silenced, no one else has stepped forward. Awareness has taken a back seat and our communities have turned into battlegrounds.

Just as families once worshipped together in church, that the union is what spoken words poets are trying to recreate. If you listen to their words and put them in perspective, you'll begin to see the logic in what they're saying.

It's never too late to admit you're wrong. Give spoken word poetry a try and see if it's beneficial to you. I'm sure you'll leave either refreshed or angry. Either way, you've left with more than you came in with.

Walking Blind

Greetings, with the utmost love and respect to all who read this. Now, a real quick introduction of myself. I am a 22 year old man, who is doing time in state prison. I'm not saying I know it all, but I want to share what I have been through and continue to go through with those who are "walking blind" to the truth of this life and think it is cool to come to the "pinta".

Hopefully, I can guide and shine some light and save a life of our young Raza. I'm young myself and I understand what and how a lot of you younger Raza feel and are going through. You want to be down for your hood, county, etc. I ain't downing that in any way whatsoever. But, ask yourself, what's your hood got to offer you? Is it going to pay your bills? Is it going to put money on your books? Is it going to write you? Is it going to visit you?

I know this sounds dumb, but take a minute and think about it...Here is my answer: NO! NO! NO! NO! And NO! Let me enlighten all who wish to be. Death or prison, that's what it's got to offer. Now, I don't want to be a hypocrite due to the fact that I'm still in this game myself, (Yes, I know... :-()) but this is exactly what I want to share with all of you. Once you come to prison (pinta), there ain't no laying it down or saying you don't want to ride no more without consequences; this is the real deal. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. Forget sleeping. Forget the streets.

Now let me take you back to when I was a young teen. Now, the true meaning of a "G-G" is one who is going to guide you in the right direction and inform you of the struggles of the life behind these walls and not want you to have to go through it as well. Now, sad to say, I never

Rafael Renteria gives us his insight from the state prison in Soledad, California. Rafael wants to share with us his thoughts about the game, being that he is inside the Pen and trapped inside. He wants all you readers that's involved with gangs and selling drugs to realize a few things about the game and prison life itself. It's not a cool place to be. He is telling y'all that there are two things that are guaranteed being involved in that lifestyle. Y'all can guess the answers for yourselves, but here's Rafael with some knowledge about the game that he wants all you young readers to know.

listened to none of them. You know that old saying, "I should have listened." Well, every morning I wake up and tell myself that. Yeah, at age fourteen I wanted to be the baddest mutha on the block, wanted to go to the Pinta and earn my stripes. Oooh, how "blind" I was. I wish I would have listened and gone to school, played sports, but once you're here, all you can do is wish. I don't want that to be you, sitting in a cell "wishing," wishing you did that or "I know I could have" because once them cell doors lock, you're going to be wishing.

I want all to take heed because you all have a chance to change your lives around and be the ones who make it out of the hood, to be the ones to say, "I did it." I know change ain't easy, but you must have the will power to want to succeed in life.

I, myself, am having a difficult time with change, too, but all of you young gents in Juvy, camps, etc., look at where you're at or even if you haven't been to any, think and think hard, is that what you really want out of life? Caged up like an animal with a bunch of men or, if you're a girl, with a bunch of women? Think about it... Until next time.

Much respect,
Enlightened One

I want all to take heed because you all have a chance to change your lives around and be the ones who make it out of the hood, to be the ones to say, "I did it."

What The World Has to Say...

"I feel." "I feel also," and the World says...

"I am right!" "NO! I am right," and the World says...

"It is like this." "NO! It is like this!" and the World says...

"You're not hearing me." "I do not want to hear you," and the World says...

"You're out of here!" "I am gone then!" and the World says...

"I lost some skin on that one." "I lost sleep," and the World says...

"Oh, it is you again." "Yeah, it is me," and the World says...

"Aye, have a nice day." "You, too," and the World says...

"How you been doing?" "Fine," and the World says...

"I have some good news." "Tell me," and the World says...

"Here, look at my dreams." "Oh, very beautiful," and the World says...

"Listen to this song." "That was great," and the World says...

"I did not mean for it to be like that." "I know," and the

THEE MOUSEMAN

The very powerful, and of course talented Thee Mouseman graces us with another thought-provoking piece of writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, Ca. Mouseman, you sure can say things well!

World says...

"I wish I could do this all over again," and the World says...
"It's O.K., just do not do it like that again," and the World says...

No matter what we say, the World is going to whisper...

It took me the majority of my life to understand that what the World has to say does not matter much. "They" love to whisper about what we "should be" saying to each other...

Now that I am grown up, the World has no say about my affairs. What we have to say to each other is all that matters...

You just might want to really trip off this; it is coming from a guy who has spent thirty one years in a cage. Old Man Talkin' Here...

Am I lying? Any questions? Be well, lil' folks.

JOSEPH WILLIAMS

Joseph Williams is a new contributor from Arizona State Prison Complex in Tucson, Arizona. Welcome aboard, Joseph! Glad to have your contribution. We hope to hear more from you down the road. We also look forward to hearing about who you are and of course how you found this publication.

The Light Is The Only Sun I See

The light is the only sun I see.
It's smile brings many faces, but the shine took over.
A blind person could see this light; a man approaches,
only to talk and walk.

He had a walkman for me.
He looked like I knew him from somewhere.
The music of jazz went past me.
A woman went past me holding the sun.
I only began to take notice of these things.

There was a song I used to sing;
Misty Blue came to mind by D. Moore.
The light of the sun seems fine
The light seems jealous, but that's not all right
I only want a friend I could call my own
It was all right.

*The way you play life
is up to you.*

KURTIS NEWILL

Kurtis Newill please "Say It" as he drops a few lines on us readers from a coirrectional facility in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. We always like hearing what you have to say, Kurtis!

Say It

Refuse to lose
Beg, borrow, pick and choose
I'm crafty and lay out my sun designs
Refined like cheese and wine
No love for one time
A life or era of crime
Leaves some blind
Unable to find the true spirit
The air let me clear it
Signed and sealed with a kiss

Thoughts About Thoughts
A thought afforded
Knowledge afforded
A soul's peace accorded
Sometimes we walk blind
When a light is what we needed to find
We're kept in the dark
Till a spark ignites instinct
I think I don't want to blink
Sailing rough seas
Tide, waves, and wind
Search for truth a given

LIL' MAN

Lil' Man sends his greetings to all you Beat Readers. He is locked up in the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, Ca. Lil' Man, even though he's young is trying to share his input on the game because he's a living testament. He's going through it right now. So he wants all you youngsters out there that are claiming turfs, and banging blocks to realize a couple things about the "the game." Go ahead Lil' Man spit some game to all the young readers and let them know a little something about life and being trapped in the game.

True To The Game, But No Love

Hi, Beat. My name is Lil' Man. The only truth of life is a trick, so my story, "True to the Game, But No Love" is of my life.

When you are sentenced, given a number, and locked away from the world, life seems hopeless; you feel like a failure in the world's eyes, worth nothing.

But in a world where evil lurks on every street corner, peace within oneself is a hard thing to come by. We must travel beyond mere existence and live our lives to the fullest the best we can. Things have been so hard for a race of our color and misused and rejected people that our Mexican people are still suffering. The streets can make you and the streets can break you.

The way you play life is up to you. Those caught in the trap of temporary pleasures, let me tell you, the root of all evil is the love of money and the next man's pain will surely come back to haunt you.

LUCERO HERRERA

Lucero Herrera was one of our most loyal and prolific writers in our San Francisco Juvenile Hall girls' unit and now is awaiting trial in San Francisco County Jail. She always writes poems and short stories, often about her family and always straight from her heart. Today she writes about how sad and how much it hurts her that her father, whom she finally found, hasn't been supporting her in any way, since she's been incarcerated.

You Was Supposed To Be Around

Mom said you gonna be there
But all the words you said
Sounded so friendly
No money on my books, no visit, don't accept my calls
You drive me crazy

Wake up, I'm your daughter
Why front
And put on a smile and lie to me?
I see your true color
You're just like the rest of my enemies

Out of all people you gave up on me
Is coo', though, it's nothin'
I'm strong like a dolphin's rock
Go help my brother
Get him back
I rather be here
Than home with you
You see all the things you make me do
I'll always love you
Not hate you
But out of all people
You was supposed to be around.

